

INTER-COMMUNITIES RELATIONS
THROUGH
CASTES, RITUALS & MARRIAGES

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To

The sacred hands of my Parents

INTRODUCTION

The social structure of the people of different faiths in India has many facets which are in agreement with one another and yet there are many which disagree only to differentiate the one from the other. But when a total view is taken, the panorama suggests many things to the social scientists. Variations in the ways of life of the people are due to differences in their thoughts and beliefs. But human nature, as it is, cannot but have some similar beliefs and convictions which led people to coming closer to one another.

While entertaining similar beliefs and thoughts, people desire to come in contact with one another through some social and religious ceremonies which they follow or prepetuate, year in and year out, through rituals. Indeed rituals—social and religious—are very important phenomena of a society and if they are akin to each other, they are great links.

II

"India" owes its name as such to the Greeks who came to invade this land. On their way of exploring the east they stopped on the banks of a wide river, the *Sindhu*, which they called the "Indus". Across this river lay a vast tract; this they described as the land of a people whom they called the "Hindus".

The people of this land lived in isolated patches. Rarer were the occasions when they had contacts among themselves, for the then geophysical conditions stood in the way of frequent inter-communications. The multiplicity of languages and racial sub-strata were also responsible to a great extent for their cultural differences. As a result there grew

up many a society in hundreds of tracts with distinctive socio-economic and religious patterns. At last there came the greatest cultural inundation due to immigration of the Aryans in successive phases to these tracts. The entire northern India was, by and large, unified under a pattern of Aryan culture. though there were some who offered resistance to the Aryan infiltrations.

Different local groups and communities gradually imbibed the culture of the Aryans, as they were allured and influenced by their superior status and technology. But a peculiar phenomenon was noticeable in the new societies that emerged. They did not entirely follow the Aryan ways of life and thinking. The societies remained flexible. There survived many traits of the older rites and rituals, and many new element were also borrowed from the Aryans. Thus a new society gradually emerged in this land after the Aryanisation of India. This was, generally speaking, called the Hindu Society.

This Hindu society became, in course of time, a pattern by itself in a larger sense. But the ways of their life were generally punctuated with a host of rituals and were encouraged by different castes, ethnic groups and religious beliefs. Also, the higher were the castes, the more were the rituals connected with their life-cycle. Again, in many cases, common living under similar geophysicial conditions and participation of all people in the local festivals, generated a local culture attuned to the larger culture of the land. These factors introduced many idioms of rituals as indispensable traits of life-activities in the social fabric. As a result, there grew up the Hindu culture, which although stained with many changes, still survives. Even the Hindus re-oriented themeselves according to the circumstances of time through the ages, still they did not give up their distinctive qualities. At a later stage we find the survival of Hindu rituals in the socio-religious and socio-economic-

customs and traditions of some groups of people who later on turned to the path of Islam or of Christianity under various circumstantial exigencies.

What was true in India, was true for Bengal also. But in Bengal's case, the circumstances were still more prolific. Here the people largely followed the pre-Aryan customs and traditions of their own. They were influenced by the Aryan or Brahmanical concepts, after passing through a long contact with the main trunk of the Aryans living in Northern India. The continuance of Bengal's own traditions and customs was favoured by her geographical conditions. She was separated, as it were, from the rest of India by intervening forests, intersecting rivers, her moist climate, floods and tidal bores, hurricanes and cyclones. The people, again, were very independent in their outlook and had tendencies to live in their own culture, and had better re-oriented Aryan cultute to their own ways, than to be influenced by the Brahmanical concepts of Northern India. This was the condition of things for a long stretch of time. Even, at the time of Ballal Sena belonging to the Sena Dynasty, it was noticed that Bengal remained largely outside the grip of Brahmanical or Aryan influence. They were under the influence of Buddhism which was nothing but a form of "Liberal Hinduism",poised against Brahmanical conservatism and hateful casteism. Ballal Sena tried hard to introduce orthodox Brahmanical traditions among the people.

The efforts of Ballal Sena bore fruit to some extent, But it generally took a long time to make people disavow their ways of living and customs, for sentiments and practices made people fall in love with their old traditions in preference to what they considered new and unconventional. This is the basic human attitude everywhere. So the people of Bengal partly followed the regional traditions of their own which they also believed to be Hinduistic. This largely explains how the principal Hindu customs per-

meated their culture, although there were apparent differences at places.

After Ballal Sena, the orthodox Hindu traditions were renovated and Bengalee society was refashioned in conformity with the Indian culture. This continued for a few centuries. But at last, there came a wave of Muslim influence upto this part of the country. With greater might and better strategy, the Muslims conquered this tract and the rulers of Bengal yielded, after a nominal fighting.

As a sequel of conquest, the Muslim rulers of Bengal tried conversions—both individual and *enmasse*. Like Buddhism Islam also had no place for rigid casteism. But the Hindu society was divided into castes—some with a superior status and some with an inferior one and there subsisted ill-feeling and animosity among them. As a result many people with inferior social status took Islam to be a relievsng power from on high. Therefore, they. along with many, who once had embraced Buddhism, professed Islam quite wilfully in order to get rid of the curse of casteism. The upper caste people generally enjoying many kinds of social privileges along with higher social status, did not feel the necessity of embracing Islam and when necessary they either offered resistance to the spread of Islam among them or fled to somewhere else. Of course, it is was not that some upper caste people had not professed Islam either under duress or for the reason that some Muslim rulers offered, in exchange for conversion, baits of power, pelf and position to some extent. As the low caste people were deprived of many social privileges and had been suffering from social degradation, they welcomed Islam which believes in equality of civil, political and spiritual rights of man and universal brotherhood. It knows no rigidity in casteism and makes no distinction between man and man. In Islam the poor and the rich can dine together and pray to God from the same

platform. That was why some Muslim rulers and Kazis succeeded in converting a large number of low-caste people to Islam quite easily. A new Muslim society cf converts thus came into existence and gradually they multiplied in number. They followed the Islamic ideals but continued to observe some of their earlier Hindu rituals. In course of time. these rituals were given Islamic patronage, and were explained in the background of Islamic tenets. Besides, there was no scope for the converts to be reconverted into the fold of Hiuduism, because the Hindus considered the Muslims as Mlechha (unclean). Thus continued the process of Islamisation unopposed for a long time.

A delve into the socio-religious customs and traditions will convince us that the Hindu rituals have been surviving since long and that their survival is a peculiar phenomenon in Indian society, a society which exists as a unity amidst diversities.

Similar was the situation in the case of conversion to Christianity. The British rulers and missionaries were not as much enthusiastic in conversion, as were some Muslim rulers. The incipient conversion was struck amongst the tribals and the low-caste Hindus. They stressed the inequities of Hindu society, and allured these innocent folk into Christianity through offer of jobs, lucrative positions and some recognizable status in the society they lived in. In this way, the conversion in Bengal became appreciably large in number. However, though the people embraced Christianity, their attitudes towards the rituals relating to birth, marriage, death and so forth, did not revolutionise altogether. Often they carried their old Hindu impressions with them. Only they began to explain those rituals in the background of Christian tenets. The converted Christians here still practise many rituals which were originally Hindu in texture and complexion. The survival of Hindu rituals in Indian society which is composed of the Hindus, Muslims (including converted Muslims)

and Christians (including converted Christians) in India, is an interesting feature of this society, and these go a long way to explain the unity in the midst of diversities,

III

A discussion on *Rituals* seems to be apt here. Rituals mean the performance of religious as well as social and ancestral traditions, manners and customs created out of a staunch devotion to some supernatural or evil spirit. Some of these traditions were found on analysis to have been observed since time immemorial on some hygienic grounds such as purification of mind and body, and some for respect to the superiors and some for maintenance of social order, distinction and discipline etc. Many of the ancestral traditions and customs practised hundreds of years ago, are followed now-a-days by a vast majority of population irrespective of caste and creed. W. H. R. Rivers, an eminent athropologist said, "There is no more depressing and apparently hopeless task than that of trying to discover why people perform rites and ceremonies and conform to the social customs of their community." But the study of ritualism often exposes the deeper historical significance of different civilisations more explicitly than that of other cultural traits.

Rituals play an important part in the life of peoples all over the world. Almost all the behaviourist pattern of life, not to speak of an individual only but of a group, is generally scanned by the prevailing nature of rituals. After all, a man may best be known by the rituals he is in the habit of peformance of. Of course, the nature of rituals varies at different degrees at different socio-religious situations, so much so, that this variation can be pronounced even in a group of community of the same religion if they live in different surroundings or parts of the same country. Besides, it depends also on the socio-religious status of a community.

The social rituals relate specially to birth, marriage and death i.e. the rituals observed from the cradle to the grave. As such, it will be appropriate here to discuss the meaning of rituals from different points of view.

The religion either primitive or modern in nature, is made up of various types of beliefs, practices and superstitions resulting in the formation of various rituals. The schools of different opinions have given various connotations of the term ritual. In 1920 Willis Cook in his work "Social Evolution of Religion" has defined that ritual makes for morality and morality finds its origin and sanction in the religion. In other words rituals are the guiding factors in human life. Wach Joachim in his "Sociology of Religion" (1931) has described that vital religion must create and sustain a social relationship which can be strengthened through ritualism. As to ritual, it has been described in the "Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics" edited by James Hastings in 1954 that in the cultural grade the ritualism reflects and sustains social organisation with the moral approach, because morality itself finds its most cogent support in rituals. In the "Encyclopaedia of Social Science", edited by Edwin in 1955, the term ritual has been postulated as a form of prescribed and elaborated behaviour that occurs both as spontaneous invention of inividuals and cultural traits.

The origin of rituals is obscure and very antique. Perhaps the beginning of rituals lies in the attempt to control and cope with the changing environmental situtations. They were found to be, sometimes, in association with magical beliefs. During the Vedic era, rituals formed a part of religion in India. As such, the whole pattern of life was then in isolation but with spiritual significance attached to it.

Hinduism is eminently popular in its practices and external manifestations and essentially "a religion of the learned". It is indeed a complex and rich religion. It

cannot be understood, if its 'Vedanta' and 'Sankhya' have not been fully comprehended or if at the outset there is no idea of immense network of symbolism which underlines and links together all Indian thoughts.

In fine, Hinduism characterises society as a whole. The caste system with its various stages of existence is a part of Hinduism. Life is looked upon as a culmination of rite; there is no absolute dividing line between the sacred and the profane. "When did Hinduism begin?"—a reply to this question can only be indirect. Hinduism began at the time when the original activity of the Vedic *ritual* came to an end. Hinduism assimilated some pre-Aryan or at least non-Aryan institutions which were inherited from local actochthonous cults and were blended in course of time.

As to Islam Western writers call it Muhammadanism after the name of Hazrat Mahammad, the Holy Prophet through whom this religion was revealed. They call as such on the analogy of such names as Buddhism, Caristianity, Zoroasterism and Confucianism, because of the facts that these religions have been named respectively after Goutam Buddha, Jesus Christ, Zoroaster and Confucian. The name of this religion, as clearly stated in the Holy Quran, is Islam and those who follow Islam are called Muslims.

The actual meaning of the word, 'Islam' is to enter into peace (Islam means entering into salm or silm. Salm and silm both signify peace) and a Muslim is one who makes his peace with God and man. Peace with God indicates complete submission to his will and peace with man means not only to refrain from doing harm to man but also to do good to him and both these ideas find expression in the Holy Quran as the true essence of the religion of Islam. It is thus a religion of peace having its two basic doctrines—the unity of God and the unity of brotherhood of human race. Islam has a two-fold significance: a simple profession of

faith—a declaration that there is nothing that deserves to be worshipped but God and that Muhammed is the messenger of God.

Islam has obliterated differences of colour, race, language, culture and geographical boundaries as well. This religion has proved itself to be not only the greater but the only force unifying peoples of various races with different beliefs and practices, whereas, the other religions had succeeded merely unifying the different elements of a single race. Thus Islam has laid the basis of unification of humanity, universal brotherhood of man which knows no bounds of colours, race, country, language, culture and even of rank. Islam has also laid the foundation of unity of human race beyond which human conception cannot go.

The fundamental doctrine of Islam is all men are a single nation (2 : 213) and only for that reason every nation is recognised as having received the spiritual gift of revelation from on high. It not only recognises the equality of the civil and political rights of men but also that of their spiritual rights. Islam swept away the superstitious ideas, ignorance, and rank immorality along with many other centuries-old evil habits.

Although Christianity believes in the doctrine of "to serve man is to serve God" and God is the Father, and all men and women are His children, yet this religion has failed to do away with race differences and colour-prejudices. But Islam is the only force which has succeeded in blotting out the distinction between man and man, and race and race. It believes in the unity of human race and equality of all races. In Islam the principle of equal distribution of wealth has been. granted in the name of zakat which means to take a part of the wealth of the rich and to distribute it among the poor. Islam came as a friend to the poor and destitutes for their social uplift. As per Quranic injunction fasting is compulsory for Muslims during the Ramazan month. The pangs of

hunger during this fast equate the rich with the poor, so that the former may actually realise the sufferings of the non-fed and half-fed and mould his social as well as economic behaviours as such. Islam has raised man at the lowest rank of the social ladder to the highest position of life. It made of slaves not only leaders in thought and intellect but actually kings. Islam recognises that the poor have the right in the wealth of the rich as a result of which the state collects fortieth of the wealth amassed by the rich with a view to distributing the same among the poor. It desires that man should live a happy life. It has laid down rules not only for the individual progress but also for the advancement of the society as a whole and of the nation and even of humanity.

Islam unlike Christianity does not believe in free-love which loosens all ties of social relations as free-love among the Christians leads many of tham to loosing family-tie. Islam unlike Hindusim does not believe in indissoluble binding of man and woman which turns many a home into an actual hell. The Hindus do not believe in free-love but believe in indissoluble binding of man and woman through a marriage. Of course, in modern society many Hindus with modern outlook go in for easy separation of marriage-tie and free-love as well.

Throughout their life-cycles the Hindus, Muslims and Christians observe various socio-religious rites and rituals-without which the existence of their social life cannot be imagined even.

Rites are magical rather than propitiatory ; in other words, the desired objects are attained by ceremonies which are thought to infringe upon the course of nature. Ritual is not the affair of an individual and it must be a collective adherence. J. E. Harrison likewise, opined that one element in the rites we have already observed, is that it must be done collectively by a number of persons feeling the same emotion. For example, a meal digested alone is certainly no rite ; a

meal eaten in common under the influence of a common emotion may, and often does, tend to become a rite.

Rites which are instructive in nature are found in every walk of life. These rites are concerned with birth, childhood. puberty, marriage, parentage, death along with some religious performances.

Rites have their cultural aspects and ritualism is modified to reflect and sustain social organisation. Rites vary in content and quality according to the time and place. Rituals have varied motives under varied circumstanees, but these motives with some of its derivative institutions, were actually in force in ancient days, and are still surviving in the backward society of modern time. Numerous and varied as the rites are, it is not feasible to take into account all the specified branches of ritualistic performances and some of which, as a result, are left over with the scope of a future research work. The present work, therefore, endeavours to deal with the main socio-religious rituals with a special reference to the Hiudu rites that are prevailing among the converted Muslims and Christians. The work deals also with the caste and marriage systems as are met with among different communities.

In the Hindu ceremonies folk rites play an important part. Similarly, folk customs. and rites as per beliefs, are performed by the converted Muslim and Christian societies also. The female folk particularly of older generations regardless of caste and creed, are found in every walk of their life form the cradle to the grave, to observe various socio-religious rituals. Of course, the better and educated sections of other countries also cannot help indulging in the observance of some traditional folk rituals and folk practices.

Now-a-days with the spread of education the system of traditional division of labour—man is to earn money for maintaining his family and woman is to be responsible to look after the domestic affairs of her family—has been lost.

At present many of the educated women working outside for maintenance of their families, are also to look after their domestic affairs. The spread of education amongst women, has given them the chance of doing works with other male partners and free-mixing with a large number of male folk has led to an increase in number of inter-caste and inter-religious marriages. Besides, with the spread of education many old traditional rituals observed during the life-cycle of a man as a social being, have fallen into disuse and the traditional customs are under-valued. Free mixing between marriageable men and women in educational institutions, offices and other common places, has caused many love marriages without any regard to observation of rituals from the law books of the Hindus, Muslims, and Christians. The cases of divorces have increased to a great extent. On the other hand, many old socio-religious superstitions have now become obsolete, as a result rigidity in casteism has been relaxed to a great extent and the people pertaining to Hindu, Muslim and Charistian religions after forgetting their barrier, have since long been participating in the socio-religious rites and rituals, fairs and festivals of each religion.

Anthropology is the science of social and physical features of human being of the world. The social anthropology reveals the evolution of human society. The rites and rituals relating to birth, puberty, marriage, death, and various tribal and non-tribal religious faiths are all the aspects of social anthropology. So the present study intends to add something new to sociology or social anthropology. It will also show how people are the object of traditional rituals which they cannot give up even after their acceptance of a new faith. Though some people are very easily adapted to new social systems, yet others are not so and they ultimately retain their traditional rituals. This retention may, in one hand, create confusion in the orthodox idea of a particular religion, yet this on the other hand,

destroys the socio-religious narrowness and barrier, and also bridges the gaps amongst the different socio-religious ideas, the ultimate goals of which are the same. The idea of retention of old traditions and rituals may help trace the origin of racial link of many people who will ultimately be the link-rod among the conflicting communities.

Performances of rituals jointly by the peoples of various religions, bring them more close to understand the central theme of their respective religions and prevailing socio-religious beliefs and practices relating to worship of God in various forms during birth, marriage, death, ancestral worship etc. and other religious performances. No doubt, this type of joint performances surely inspires them to love each orther's religion, and help them come to understand that every religion has taught man to love one another regardless of caste and creed. Besides it will also let the people of the concerning religions understand that due to this social contact in the changing industrial as well as urban setting there are occurring a good number of inter-religious marriages, although marriage as a whole is deemed to be Shastric, religious and spiritual union of two co-religionists. It is a sacrament, indivisible and inviolable binding force for ever between the wedding spouses. In the social set-up complexities of life are disciplined by a good number of religious codes of conduct, sanctions and prohibitions. Of course, many rites are superstitious and developed out of fear for evil spirits or some supernatural elements. There is an existence of non-shastric rites. Though many religious rites leading to the spiritual faith, are in practice, yet some are on the wane more in the urban and industrialised setting than in the rural folk life.

If the illiterate mass as well as all the literates could understand that they have virtually been following more or less the same socio-religious rituals and come to know the origin of a large number of converted Muslim and Christians, they would surely extend their friendly hands towards

destroying the virus of the persisting communal conflicts as well as ill feelings that result in the destruction of national property, solidarity and integrity as well. This will also help the prejudiced, superstitious and orthodox people forget their enmity with the people of the other religions and their joint efforts will surely be able to establish communal harmony and universal brotherhood and peace by forgetting the hatred for the people belonging to other religious faiths. This will also help them in isolating the miscreants and opportunists who are virtually believers in no religion but indulge only in massacre, looting, plundering, arson etc. This will let the orthodoxy, superstitious beliefs and practices get loose and will help in creating a common cult and integrity with the cream of all religious faiths and will ultimately lead to social prosperity and national solidarity as well. If this exotic influence could gather momentum, it will bring about changes in social pattern among the sons of the soil irrespective of caste and creed. As a result the existing caste system will, in course of time, lose further its rigidity; not only inter-caste marriage, but inter-religious marriage will not be far-reaching. And communalism will in future be crushed completely and permanently. The primary task to establish a democratic socialism will be to give security of life, property and honour to every citizen irrespective of caste and creed.

This is a book which contains the fruit of a careful investigation into the existence of similar socio-religious rituals among the Hindus and the converts from Hinduism to Islam and Christianity. This investigation was made among the converts of various types now residing in the places of study in some villages mainly in the districts of 24 Paraganas and Midnapore in West Bengal. This event of survival has been taking place since the conversion of one section of the Hindus, at first to the Muslim and the other section to the Christian at a later period, on

various grounds which have been dealt with in detaill in a subsequent chapter. Of course, there was a distinct character of this survival of Hindu rituals among the converts, but now-a-days, due to spread of modern education, as well as rapid urbanisation and various employment facilities, the old superstition-ridden society has, in many respects, been in a process of change. For instance, once the social condition was such that if a Hindu would take meal with a Muslim or Christian, he, sometimes along with the other members of his family, had to lose his caste-status and other associated privileges. Now-a-drys, even inter-marriage between a Hindu and a Muslim or a Christian can hardly make any one an outcast, specially in the urban social set-up. But up to early 20th century, the orthodox Hindus had observed their own socio-religious rituals and the Muslims and Christians their own. Once the Muslims and Christians were hardly allowed to participate in the Hindu socio-religious functious. To day, customary rigidity under the modern outlook has been relaxed to a great extent in the Hindu and Muslim as well as Christian societies.

At present many orthodox Muslims and Christians along with converts, are found to take active part in some Hindu socio-religious rituals. Likewise, the Hindus also take part in some Muslim and Christian socio-relgious functions. Many Muslims are often served meal, being seated in the same row with the Hindus in a Hindu marriage feast, They are also found to participate in the Hindu worship of the Goddesses, like Durga, Sitala, Manasa, Saraswati etc. ; the Hindus also emdrace the Muslims on the day of Vijaya Dasami (immersion day of Durga)—a day for extending love and good-wishes to all, irrespective of whether they are friend or foe. On the other hand, many Hindus also participate in some Muslim and Christian festivals. This secular outlook in all spheres of life has, today, greatly influenced and moulded the behaviour patterns of individuals.

IV

The present study is practically an attempt to determine the extent of survival of Hindu rituals among the converts from the Hindus and to make an objective assessment of how far this survival may help minimise the communal conflicts and tensions, that affect our national integrity, time and again. This study also widely covers history of conversion from Hinduism to Islam and Christianity, caste-system, various forms of marriage, divorce, separation and re-marriage along with many social rituals, including some important religious performances observed by the Hindus, Muslims and Christians, and the converts from the Hindus to the Muslims and Christians. The features of rituals associated with marriage, birth, death and religious performances vary from community to community. Many of these rites and rituals are again attributed to the religious and social ideology of a particular community by their adherents. However, solemnisation of marriage according to the Vedas and Upanishadas, in case of the Hindus, the Quran and Hadis in case of the Muslims and the Bible in case of the Christans, is a matter of great importance, because of its relation to the religious ideas of the three communities. The role of the *Shastric* (scriptural) rites and rituals in traditional patterns of the Hindu, Muslim and Christian marriages centres round the methods of solemnisation. The marriage ceremonies of these communities are generally, associated with incantations from the Vedas, the Upanishadas, the Quran and Hadis and the Bible, as the case may be of the communities concerned.

The present survey was conducted among a section of the converted Muslims and Christians to trace the history of their conversion as far as practicable, along with their tendency towards retention of the socio-religious rituals of their pre-conversion society. It has also been analysed how

far these converts give their moral support to the observance of such rituals for bringing their community to the level of the Hindus in the social ladder with a view to mitigating therebey the virus of communal ill-feeling.

The prevailing manners and customs, social behaviour and tendencies of the different types of people belonging to different religious faiths like Hinduism, Islam and Christianity, are the real index, by means of which the survival of Hindu rituals among the converts can be assessed. This study as such, deals with these aspects.

In India caste-sustained Hinduism manifests itself in many ritual patterns. This country was invaded in 711 A.D. by the Muslims and later on, by some western people who were Christians. Due to circumstantial exigencies and prolonged contact with these groups of people at different places and periods of time, a good number of local people, specially the Hindus, had been either compelled or enchanted to embrace either Islam or Christianity. In many cases, reformatory movements were started from time to time for creation of other smaller sects like those of the Buddhists and the Jains. So in course of this study, it has been revealed how far these segmented religious groups share in the traditional patterns of Hindu rituals. In addition to the above, it has also been observed how far this type of common sharing of rituals minimises the prevailing group distances and tensions between the converts and the neighbouring Hindus, thus generating a sense of national solidartity and integrity. This fraternal idea, if further developed, will pick up its own momentum and destory the virus of communal conflicts and develop communal harmoney through inter-marriage and common participation in socio-religous rites by the Hindu, Muslim and Cnaistian masses.

For a correct and unbiased assessment, the following types of samplings were taken into consideration :

1. Random sampling.
2. Judgment sampling.
3. Systematic sampling.

(a) In case of random sampling, the samples have been selected from various sections of the population in some selected villages of the Districts of 24-Parganas and Midnapore in West Bengal, so that a fairly large cross-section of the converts from the Hindu to the Muslim and native Christian may be covered.

(b) In judgement sampling. the sample has been selected from the data of random sampling, according to the basic requirement of this work. A schedule has been prepared out of this for systematic sampling.

(c) From judgement sampling, a final schedule has been prepared showing the various types of nomenclatures concerning the prevailing rites and rituals, restrictions and obligations observed in religious performances, marriage, birth, childhood, puberty and death. The informants selected from the localities had to answer questionnaire of the schedule in presence of the author. The informants were selected from among those who were well-conversant with the religious and social rituals prevailing in the localities under study.

At first, distinguished social workers or persons of repute were contacted. Selection of informants had been made in this manner so that they could supply correct information about the facts of conversion concerning the converted families and the socio-religious rituals observed by them. As a result, delay in collecting relevant data could be avoided. Of course, the author had to reside for days in the localities under study, with the villagers on many occasions, in order to verify physically the particulars regarding socio-religious rituals

which were supplied by the informants. Besides, the author as far as practicable, had personally approached the heads of many families, and witnessed their ceremonies relating to marriage, birth, puberty, death and religious performances, etc. and had taken many photographs as docŭmentary evidences.

The author, while collecting the relevent data, had to face a great difficulty, because the people of the rural areas were very much suspicious about the purpose of the enquiries made. The heads of many converted families, who were chosen as informants, thought that the investigation was being conducted by the Police, or the Rationing Department or some other Government Departments. As a result, in some cases, it took long time in getting formally acquainted with the informants and convincing them of the object of the project. Sometimes, they took the author as a person with pernicious motive and sometimes, due to social prejudice, concealed the facts lest their prejudices and superstitions should be exposed. The information supplied by the informants were cross-checked from their relations and neighbours as well. The collected information were properly scanned and finally processed according to the needs of the subject matter.

The investigation was confined to the representative families contacted through relations as well as persons acquainted with the author himself. The investigation, as a matter of fact, has covered a wide range of facts and figures relating to the theme of this work. Of course, sometimes, the author received generous co-operation from some village leaders or social workers amoung the converts, who showed marked eagerness in exposing the facts of their very poor living condition, and expressed deep concern for their having to face such a miserable condition. They also expressed their heart-felt desire to contact such a man who can bring their wretched condition of living to the notice of the Government for their social uplift. So

without the least hesitation, they spoke of the ills of their social condition and the persisting prejudices. Besides, they said that by embracing Islam or Christianity, their fore-fathers neither could improve social status nor were able to raise them up to the levels of Arab Muslims and European Christians though, after conversion, they got rid, for a time, of the curse of casteism of the then Hindu Society.

VI

The chosen rural areas fall under Baruipur, Sonarpur and Bishnupur Police Stations in the District of 24 Parganas, and Mahisnadal Police Station in the District of Midnapore in West Bengal, where a good number of Muslims and native Christians live. Requisite data were available for the study in those areas. In order to make a comprehensive as well as comparative study with a view to proving how far the religious and social rituals observed by the converts, are in conformity with or deviate from orthodox patterns of the rites and rituals observed by the Hindus, Muslims and Christians. The author has described in this book, all the orthodox patterns of rites and rituals relating to religious performances, marriage, birth, child-hood, puberty and death prevalent among the Hindus, Muslims and Christians, from some authentic law books of the people belonging to the said faiths.

VII

The history of conversion of the groups of people covered by this study, has been delineated in detail in the relevant chapter, with a special reference to the most authentic books written on this matter. Besides, some interesting and unwritten historical facts regarding conversion of the people

under study, have also been collected by the author for compiling a factual history of conversion of the localities. This may be treated as a new addition to the earlier works of various authors. It has been verified by investigation that most of the converts belonged to the Scheduled Castes namely Teor, Rajbanshi, fishermen etc. Their family surnames are Das, Mondal, Gharami, Biswas, Naskar, Halder, Sarkar, Mallick, Sardar, Dhali, Baidya, Khan etc. irrespective of whether they are Charistians or Muslims. The use of these family surnames has practically revealed a missing-link between the converts and the Scheduled Caste Hindus of the localities, among whom the surnames mentioned are still in vogue. The socio-religious rituals observed by the converted Christians also correlate with many of those observed by the Hindus of the same localities which suggest their Hindu origin. Further, the Hindu names like Gopal, Narayan, Bholanath, Nanda, Kanai, Bhutnath, Gouri, Kalindi, Mukul, Narayani etc. are in use among the converts from the Hindus to the Muslims as well as to the Christians.

A gradual change in various rituals has been revealed here, in the context of time and environment. The present book may, therefore, be a valuable document in relation to space and time dimensions. It may also shine as a lesson for communal harmony to those who indulge in communal conflicts, destruction of national property, looting, arson, etc. which ultimately impair national solidarity and integrity.

At first, from the Census Report of India, the author came to know the names of the localities in West Bengal, where the converted Christians live. He had further information in this respect from an inhabitant namely Sri Sunil Chakrabarty of the village of Khasmallik under the Baruipur Police Station in the District of 24 Parganas. One day while taking his meal in the kitchen of Sri Chakrabarty, the author heard him call out one as Ahmad Saheb out of those who were then taking meal sitting in the same row

with the author. Taken aback, the author pondered a while over how a Muslim could be allowed, to take his meal sitting jointly with other Hindus in the kitchen of a Hindu Brahmin family. Even a few decades ago, it was quite unthinkable. A Muslim was considered by the sophisticated Hindus, to be a "Yabana" and his taking meal in the kitchen of any such Hindu family was considered to be a serious violation of conventional social tradition. Then it was even found that in many orthodox Hindu families, a non-Hindu or a low caste Hindu was offered a seat generally in the courtyard, and the place was washed after he had left.

The modern outlook of the above Brahmin family brought a new ray of light to the author. Out of curiosity he wanted to know the where-abouts of Ahmad Saheb and also how he had become so closely intimate to Sri Sunil Chakrabarty who later on, told the author much about the historical background of this locality, the details of which have been discussed in the relevant chapter.

Besides, Sri Chkrabarty told him something about the historical background of the villages of Kamlat, Talpukur, Charer-Chak, Rammakhaler Chak, Panchghara, Ganeshpur, Naskarpur and many other villages under the Police Stations of Sonarpur, Bishnupur and Baruipur in the District of 24-Parganas; all these villages are thickly inhabited by the converted Christans and Muslims. He also told the author that the fore-fathers of Ahmed Saheb were Hindus, who used to live in the village of Panchghara under the Baruipur Police Station. His father's name was Ramanath Gharami, and later on the name was Islamised as Amanat Gharami. He at first took the author round the villages under study and got him introduced to the important men of the localities. The author met the heads of different converted families after having formed a preliminary idea about them from the information supplied by Ahmed Saheb and Sri Chakrabarty. In the cases of personal interview by

the author, the heads of the converted families at first wanted to know the motive behind the interrogations and the author's where-abouts. Of course, the author had to face less difficulty in the places where he had previously been introduced to the village teachers by Sri Sunil Chakrabarty. But in the places where the author had no such chance, he had to face a great difficulty. In some cases, the Muslim converts, out of suspicion, refused to supply the author with any information he had wanted to know.

When the author visited different families of the places under study, there had, at first, been a small gathering of the rural folk comprising children, youths and women and old men. Out of curiosity they asked the author many irrelevant questions even. Thus preliminary discussion had consumed much time before the author could record the answers to his queries. He got the answers duly signed by the literates among the converted people of the localities and those became proofs of authenticity of the collected data. The male members were not very much interested in personal matters. They were anxious to know if any benefit could go to them, through that investigation.

The author had taken photographs of many families and he presented them with the copies of those photographs. On receipt of the copies they were found to be much more keen in furnishing the author with the requisite data. Besides, Sri Subodh Das, an Assistant Teacher of the Langalberia High School of Talpukur in the Sonarpur Police Station, Sm. Kananbala Pramanik, a retired Primary School teacher of Kamlat in the Sonarpur Police Station, and Sri Sudhir Pramanick, alias Mr. Peter, a local clergyman of the village of Behala in the Bishnupur Police Station extended all possible help to the author in the matter of collecting the relevant data. Mr. Peter, even at his ripe old age, took much trouble in taking the author round the village of Rammakhaler Chak.

In many cases, the author found that all the elderly male and female folk of the village, were not well-conversant with the religious and social rites and rituals practised by the members of their families. As a result, he had to get all the statements verified by some well-conversant male and female folk. Further, the author had to gather information about the original settlements in the villages under study; further information about the occupations as well as economic and educational status of their Hindu fore-fathers; and still further information about the reasons and exigencies under which their fore-fathers had to embrace Islam or Christianity. So, sufficiently elderly members like Gopal Gharami, aged 95 years, Amanat Gharami, aged 75 years Charubala Pramanick, aged about 65 years and Sudhir Pramanick, aged about 78 years and also some educated youngmen like Ahamad Saheb and Subodh Das aged about 35 years with their modern and unprejudiced outlook, were consulted.

Though the female folk at first felt shy to come forward, yet under the instructions of the male folk, they came to the author and answered to the most of the questions put to them. As access to many a family for a male person was, in this respect, very much difficult, so in many cases the author took his wife with him who approached the female members and collected much information from them.

IX

A good number of the converted Muslim and Christian families whose particulars are given in the relevant chapters, were selected from the rural areas already mentioned. In-order to ascertain the details of survival of Hindu rituals among the converted people many samples of rituals were collected from different places under study and were compared with those of the orthodox Hindus, Muslims and Christians. The rituals prescribed in their authentic law

books and scriptures too, were consulted with a view to determining exactly the points of or deviations from the survival of Hindu rites and rituals amongst the converts.

The people studied are divided into the following two categories :

(i) Elderly people of the places under study :—Those people who were found to live there for three generations or more with a prejudiced outlook, were included in that category.

(ii) Young people of the places under study :—Those who were found to live there for less than three generations and had a modern outlook, were selected only to obtain the data pertaining to trends of gradual changes if any, in the rituals of the inhabitants concerned—specially changes due to the impact of urbanisation and of the modern unprejudiced outlook.

The observations were mainly concentrated in the representative families of the converted Muslims and Christians, and those families were considered to be sample-units for the study of their socio-religious rituals. The author has noted observance of the same practices by these types of converted people in some other regions of West Bengal.

Economic conditions relating specially to occupation, education etc. considerably influence the nature of participation in socio-religious rituals. So the occupations of the earning members of the families have been taken into consideration, in order to make an assessment of the socio-economic status of the people. It has also been noted that sudden changes in occupations bring about corresponding changes in many aspects of the rituals practised by the people. This matter of changes in the occupation patterns of the converts has also been considered necessary for statistical analysis, which has been made in the relevant chapter.

Now-a-days many families with modern outlook do not observe all the socio-religious rites and rituals in toto. As a result, a large number of the members of a family, excepting

the elderly ones, hardly do know the details of various rituals. Besides, even in the rural areas, marriages are now solemnised, in many cases, by registration and love marriages are occupying the places of negotiated marriages in the villages too. Further, some people also care a little to know the details of rites and rituals, and many have scarcely heard of many of the same. This was revealed when they were asked to narrate the rituals practised during the wedding ceremonies of their sons and daughters.

X

No consolidated work, excepting the ones mentioning a few stray cases of the survival of Hindu rituals among the converts, appears to have so far been done in respect of the problems mentioned here. Besides, particulars relating to conversion from the Hindus to the Muslims and Christians explained in a systematic manner, are also lacking.

In the works of some historians, travellers and courtiers it has been well-depicted as to how there has been a large number of conversions in India, resulting in a significant increase in the number of Muslims within a few decades during the Muslim invasion of India, and how proselytisation during the period became rampant. This aspect has been discussed by the author, in the chapter on mass conversion from the Hindus to the Muslims. How these Muslim converts have retained the various rituals of their Hindu fore fathers even after their conversion, has also been discussed in the relevant chapters. But many of those historians are found to be utterly confused due to paucity of sufficient data regarding the survival of Hindu rituals among the converts, and so they have failed to draw up a detailed picture of this survival. Of course, they owe rich compliments for the valued information they have presented in some relevant chapters of their works, which may be a guide to the future research students.

Therefore, the author before depicting in detail the results of his observation in regard to the survival of Hindu rituals among the converts, desires to refer to here some historical sources which largely helped him in exploring the mystery, and paved the way, by offering clues for undertaking this work. Books consulted for the purpose have been mentioned in the Bibliography.

With this background, the author has tried to show how far the Hindu patterns of life overwhelmed with rituals, are dominant in the cases of converts also.

Conversion divides the society vertically, but the people have horizontal relationship among them in many aspects of their socio-economic and religious life. These are the sustaining forces that bind different groups of people together with a common string of rituals. Naturally, they indulge in participation in common rites and rituals in a local setting and it all cuts across the religious boundary or makes its edges more eroded.

CONVERSION—A HISTORICAL RETROSPECT

I

India was originally the land of various autochthonous people, who used to live, more or less, a compact and segregated life with their own material culture and technology. Their ways of life and customs also were of different nature. Later on, the Aryan groups of people having superior culture, invaded India and started living here permanently by conquering these people. This gave them interactional advantage and a more or less, homogenous flexible religion spread out in the form of Hinduism. At first Hinduism in India made a wonderful success in reassimilating the receding religion like Buddhism. Later on, the Greeks, the Sakas, the Kushans and the Huns who invaded India, at different times, were gradually absorbed within the Hindu-fold. India was again invaded by Muslims and Christians and under various circumstantial exegencies the indigenous people of the soil were converted into Muslims and Christians. Islam being rigidly monotheistic, iconoclastic and religio-culturally insular could not be so absorbed. Likewise, Christianity being strictly monthiestic and possessing some other characters as those of Islam was not absorbed to the Hindu ranks.

The number of Muslim and Christian population in India increased by leaps and bounds through conversion, since the days of invasion of India by those two communities. The large number of converts from Hindu to Muslim and Christian is the missing link between the Muslims and Christians on one hand and the indigenous people of the soil on the other hand, which may be established through an analysis of the nature of retention of rituals of their Hindu fore-fathers, even after their conversion on various grounds, such as, (1) forced conversion by the invaders and rulers (ii) conversion through the influence of Muslim and Christian

traders and Missionaries (iii) conversion due to having been made outcaste (iv) voluntary conversion of the low-caste people to get rid of caste degradation (v) conversion under legal pressure, and (vi) conversion on economic grounds.

The Indian Muslims and Christians other than the Hindus form two most important constituents of the national manpower of India. They have supplied major forces in shaping India's economic, political and social history. As such, Indian economy is a mixed economy, and Indian literature and culture are a mixed culture, formed by the efforts of all the Hindus, Muslims and Christians. Yet woven into the intricate pattern of Indian life, the Muslims and Christians have yet maintained their individuality.

In most other countries, Muslims have assimilated the people of the land into the main stream of Islamic culture. But India is the only exception, where neither Islam has been overpowered by India, nor India has been absorbed into the fold of Islamic world.

India though commonly described as the land of the Vedas and the home of the Hindus, she is also the Motherland of the largest Muslim population in a single country of the world. The converted Muslims who were small in number at the beginning, i.e. in the 7th Century, and at the advent of Muslim invasion of India by a Muslim army began to increase gradually with the expansion of Muslim rule on the Indian soil. These converts who were mostly low caste Hindus, suffering from Brahmanical caste tyrannies and ex-communication on trivial grounds, had abandoned the religion of their fore-fathers and embraced Islam. But unfortunately for them, even after conversion, many of them were not admitted into the aristocracy of the conquerers and were deprived of equal social and economic privileges, excepting that they were allowed to profess the same religion of their masters and pray from the same platform or in the mosque, and could dine together. They were

not gradually given any high post in the administration even during the Muslim rule, excepting in rare cases. Indian Muslims were much inferior in wealth, position and status to the vast majority of their Hindu counterparts. Their only consolation was that they professed the same religion as their rulers and could pray together with them on Fridays. Their constant desire was to be treated on a footing of equality with their foreign co-religionists and to share their power and style of livelihood. In order to attain their long ambition many of them had to imitate foreign ways and modes of livelihood and even to abjure their ancestral patterns of livelihood. It was an irony of fate on the part of the Indian Muslims that owing to these reasons, they, specially those who used to live in the urban areas, were cut off from those who had once been their kinsmen, dead or alive, and were like an alien in their own motherland.

From earliest times the Western Coast of India had been the object of plunder by piratical Arab expeditions. The historians tell us that in the Caliphate of Umar (A.D. 634-644) expeditions were sent to the towns of this West Coast. The first Muslim army are known to have appeared in India beyond the Western Coast A. D. 664 within thirty-two years of the Prophet's death. The history of Islam actually begins in India in the year A.D. 711 when it was introduced into Sind by the Arabian General Muhammad-bin-Quasim. This was immediately following the invasion of Afghanistan, the capture of Kabul, and the reported conversion of twelve thousand persons in that region. Muhammad-bin-Quasim's first act of religious zeal was to circumcise forcibly the Brahmins of the captured city of Debul. On coming to know that the Brahmins objected to that sort of conversion he proceeded to put all above the age of seventeen to death and to order all others with women and children to be led into slavery. Many Hindu temples were looted. As he

advacced towards east and captured their cities, some of the people preferred embracing Islam to death and all who were made slaves, were compelled to embrace the rel'gion of their masters to whom they were allotted. The invaders who had come to India without their wives, were used to take wives from the Hindus. Besides, Muhammad-bin Quasim is known am ng many instances, to have sent two da.ghters of the Raja Da'.ir of Sind to Basrah to enter the harem of the Governor cf Hajjaj. Arab invaders brought about conversions of a large number of Hindus in India by force.

The Turk Mahmud of Gazni invaded India in 1001. In twelve or more successive raids between A. D. 1001 and 1027 Mhmud ravaged and plundered the country as far as Gujrat in Western India and Kanauj to the east. On approaching a city of the infidels Mahmud offered them the alternative of embracing Islam or of becoming dhimmis by paying jizya which was introduced by the Caliph Umar as a head tax for the protect.on offered by the Muslim State to those of other religions. Those who neither became Muslims nor submitted to the jizyah Mahmud regarded them as harbis (enemies) against whom it was lawful to wage war until they were killed or conquered.

The people against whom the jihad is directed must first be asked to embrace Islam. If they refuse they have tried alternatives (1) to submit to Muslim rule ; become dhimmis and pay the jizyah (poll-tax) and kharaj (land tax) or (2) fight. If they emb:ace Islam, they will be treated as citizens of the Muslim States with all rights and privileges thereto. The Dhimmis are to occupy definitely an inferior status. They are not really citizens and are regarded only as wards of the State. But the status of Dhimmi may be offered only to those people who have a sacred Book (ahl-ul-kitab). The Jews, Chirstians Magians and Sabeans are treated as Dhimmi. But the pagans, idolaters (Hindus), polytheists are not regarded as ahl-ul-kitab as they are deemed to possess no holy Books. It is thought that

for them there is a choice only between Islam and death. After Mahmud and his dynasty, the political power of Islam in India was extended far and wide. Following the occupation of Sind, Hindustan, Rajputana, Gujrat and Bundel Khand the territories of Bihar and Bengal came under the influence of Islam in the year 1202. This new conquest was made by the Muslim army under Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji. At the beginning of the 14th century the Deccan had been invaded by Alauddin Khilji and during the Mughal empire (A.D 1556-1707) from Akbar to Aurangzib, the Muslim empire in India had been flung across from Quetta to the mouths of Hooghly and from Ceylon to Kashmir. But as to conversion, Islam could not be so successful. Of course, India might have more Muslims than any other countries had but could never become a Muslim country like the countries namely Egypt, North Africa, Asia-Minor, Persia, Central Asia which were completely over-run in the early centuries of the Muslim conquest. The victory of Muslim faith was complete there. Not so in India. This was due to the fact that the Hindus in India were well organised in the socio-religious life under the domination of priests and caste for which little could be affected towards over-throw of Hindu religion from India. Had the Hindus been as well organised in their political affairs as they were in their socio-religious affairs and had there been no outcaste and scheduled caste groups to welcome Islam as a release from the then social bondage, it is safe to say that even a partial victory of Islam might not have been so easily won in India.

One of the characteristics of Muslim conquest of India was, it is beyond doubt, that of a militant propaganda. Many Muslim invaders and rulers wanted to establish not only a Muslim Government over the people but the Muslim faith as well. They wanted to convert India as Dar-ul-Islam (abode of Islam) from Dar-ul-Herb (abode of enemy). As a result, throughout the whole period of Muslim contact with India

the attitude of many Muslim rulers to their Hindu subjects as well as their religion had been intolerable and oppressive excepting during the suzerainty of some Muslim rulers of whom Akbar, Zain-ul-Abidin, Bahadur Shah, Barbak shah and Hussain Shah etc. were most notable. The whole object of the oppressive Muslim invaders and the rulers apparently was the religious one of either converting the infidels or sending them to hell with the sword. If they submitted at all, they were subject to looting and imposition of Jizyah (poll tax). Many Hindus embraced Islam wilfully in order to avoid oppression for safety of their life or to be exempted from Jizyah.

Muhammad Ghuri one of the enthusiastic successors of Mahmud showed zeal in propagating Islam. Hasan Nizami says, 'He purged by his sword the land of Hind from the filth of infidelity and vice and freed the whole of that country from the thorn of God-plurality and the impurity of idol-worship and by his royal vigour and intrepidity he left not one temple standing'. (Taj-ul-Ma'ather E. D., II., 217). He destroyed many Hindu temples and built in their stead mosques. He frequently resorted to force as an incentive to conversion. Once when he approached Koil (Aligarh) in A. D. 1194., those of the garrison who were wise and acute, were converted to Islam, but the others were slain with the sword (Hasan Nizami E.D. II. 222). During the Slave Dynasty Qutb-ud-din destroyed nearly a thousand temples and raised mosques on their ruins.

Iltutmish was likewise very much enthusiastic in his attempts to put Islam on a strong basis in his kingdom.

During the reign of Ala-ud-din Khilji Amir Khusru records in his Tarikh i-Alai that Malik Kafur, during his invasion of south India, explained to the Hindu Rai of Dur Samund 'that he was sent with the object of converting him to Islam or of making him a Dhimmi and subject to poll-tax, or of slaying him if neither of these terms were assented to' (Amir Khusru, E. D, III. 89). The Rai saw his resistence to the sword of

Islam was useless. When the arm of Ala-ud-din's fortune was raised, he became the ruler of Hindustan. During his advance from the capital of Karra, the Hindus in alarm descended into the earth like ants. He destroyed many Hindu temples and killed many infidels during his military expedition.

Though Sher Shah was tolerant to words his Hindu subjects, yet it is known that one of his learned associates Shaykh Nizam boldly recommended Jihad. He said, "There is nothing equal to a religious war against infidels. If you be slain, you become a martyr, and if you live, you become a Ghazi (hero), (Abbas Khan E.L., IV. 408).

The slaughter of the enemy frequently gave a great setback to the indigenous culture of the Hindus as in the conquest of Bihar by Muhammad Bakhtyar Khalji. Tabaqat-i-Nasiri informs that a great plunder fell into the hands of the victors when they took a certain place. Most of the inhabitants were Brahmins with shaven heads. They were put to death. A large number of books were found, but none could explain their contents, as all the men had been killed. (Minhaj-as-Siraj, Tabaqat-i-Naseri, E.D. II, 306).

The Sultan Firuz Shah born of a Hindu mother destroyed many Hindu temples. He did every thing to convert Hindus to Islam. In his Futuhat, Firuz Shah wrote that he had encouraged his infidel subjects to embrace Islam, the religion of the Prophet and also proclaimed that every one who repeated the creed and became a Muslim should be exempted from the Jizyah. "Information of this came to the ears of the people at large and great numbers of Hindus presented themselves and were admitted to the honour of Islam. Thus they came forward day by day from every quarter, and were exonerated from the Jizyah. They also were favoured with presents and honours." (Futuhat-Firuz Sahi, E.D. III, 386).

Under Firuz Tughluq for the first time in history of the Sultanate the state became a proselytizing agency. In 1380 when Firuz marched to Katihar he ordered a general massacre

of the people, because the Raja Kharku of Katihar put two Sayyids to death. Kharku fled into the hills of Kumaun and the Sultan's wrath fell upon the people of the province. As a result, thousands of innocent people were slain and about 23,000 were taken prisoners and converted into slaves.

Firuz's Prime Minister Khan-i-Jahan Muqbul, originally a Brahmin whose harem is said to have comprised two thousand women of different nationalists, He had many children from them. Firuz Tughluq prohibited the Hindus from bathing in the ghats of the sacred rivers. The Hindus had no freedom to follow their own religion. Muhammad-bin-Tughluq even with enlightened outlook refused permission to repair Hindu or Buddhist temples.

The iconoclast Sikander Shah was also a fanatic Muslim ruler. He wanted to prohibit the Hindus from bathing in the sacred tank at Thaneswar. He indulged in the policy of destroying temples and images and building mosques there upon. He broke the sacred image of the Jwalamukhi temple at Nagarkot and gave its pieces to butchers to use them as weights at the time of weighing meat. He ordered a Hindu named Bodhan to be put to death for no other offence than saying that Hinduism is as true religion as Islam. He did not permit the Hindus to bathe at the bathing ghats of the river Yamuna and prohibited the barbers from shaving their beard. Sikandar Shah and his minister of Suha Butt, a convert from Hinduism and Sultan Mahmud Begra of Gujrat did not permit Hindus to ride on horse back. They did not allow the Hindus to go about without wearing a red patch on their person or to celebrate openly Holy or Dewali or other festivals. All these socio-religious disabilities imposed upon the Hindus, led many of them to embracing Islam.

Alike Firuz Sikander made an attempt to seduce the Hindus and convert them to Islam. The Hindus had no

permission to build new temples or to repair old ones. They were known as Dhimmis who had to live under guarantee to enjoy only a restricted freedom in following their religion if they used to pay Jizya. They were not allowed to celebrate their religious rites openly and never do any religious propaganda. A good number of disabilities were imposed upon them in the matters of State employment and enjoyment of civic rights. They were in fact treated as foreigners and not as full fledged citizens of their own mother land.

Aurangzeb during Mughal rule in India destroyed many temples and converted thousands of Hindus into Muslims. He personally taught the sacred Kalma to many infidels with success and he is known to have brought about the forced conversion of some Rajput tribes known as Malkans in the vicinity of Agra. At first the head of a tribe or family would embrace Islam in order to preserve their ancestral property and the others of the family would follow him. Aurangzeb imposed Jizyah upon the Hindus after a long interval since it had been abolished by Akbar.

The last extreme type of forced conversion took place in 1921 during the out break known as Moplah Rebellion (J. J. Banninga, The Mopla Rebellion of 1921, M. W., XIII, 379). This was the outcome of agitation among the most ignorant and fanatic section of Muslims of India on the part of certain 'Khilafat' preachers. At last the Moplahs went beyond the control of the Khilafat preachers. When they revolted many Hindus were the objects of their attacks. Those who refused to be converted to Islam, were killed, but those who were so converted in order to save their lives and properties, were still greater. Many of these converts were reconverted as soon as the rebellion was put down.

*** At the Delhi Unity conference held in October, 1924, the representatives of Islam mutually agreed with the Hindus that force should not be used in bringing about conversion**

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and people should be free to change their religion without fear or persecution.

Some Sultans and Generals like, Jalal-ud-din (early name Jadu Sen, Son of Raja Ganesh), Murshid Quli Khan (born of a Hindu Brahmin family), Malik Kafur (originally a Hindu Khoja), Khan-i-jahan Iqbal (originally a Telengana Brahmin), the Prime Minister of Firuz Tughloque, Kalapahar known to have been born of a Hindu family and learnt to serve as a General under Sulaimen Kararani (1565-72) of Bengal inflicted in human torture on many Hindus and converted them to Islam in a large number. Kalapahar plundered the Temple of Jagannath at Puri. But he could do no harm to the idol of Jagannath made of wood, inspite of making several attempts to destroy it by fire or throwing the same into the water of the sea. He demolished the Temple of Kamakhya near Gouhati in Assam.

The attitude of many Muslim rulers to their Hindu subjects as well as their religion had been intolerable and oppressive excepting during the suzerainty of some Muslim rulers.

The cases of forced conversion and oppression did not take place during the reign of all Muslim rulers in India. There were many who loved their Hindu and Muslim subjects almost equally and were tolerant towards the Hindus. They were Babar, Akbar, Jahangir, Zain-ul-Abidin of Kashmir and Barbak Shah and Hussain Shah etc. of Bengal.

Babar in his will, asked his son Humayun to treat all his subjects irrespective of Hindu or Muslim equally, and to be tolerant towards the indigenous people and not to do anything which could injure the Hindu feelings. He also asked him not to destroy the Hindu places of worship. Humayun, Akbar, Zain-ul-Abidin of Kashmir, Barbak Shah and Hussain Shah treated their Hindu and Muslim subjects equally. Akbar and Zain-ul-Abidin banned cowslaughter and abolished the Jizyah (Tax) imposed on the Hindus by

some of their predecessors. But it was again imposed upon the Hindus by Aurangzeb.

Akbar, Jahangir and Zain-ul-Abidin had reconstructed many Hindu temples. They had many Hindus in the high ranking posts, both in the civil and Military administration. Besides, they had many Hindu Tax Collectors, Officers and Chiefs. i.e. land-owners etc. Akbar, Jahangir, and Darasiko participated in many Hindu festivals and observed some Hindu socio-religious rituals. Zain-ul-Abidin reversed the policies of Sikandar Shah. He rehabilitated the Hindus who had been exiled during the reign of his predecessors and allowed the Hindus to indulge in their practice of *Sati*. Bahlul Lodi on the advice of a Muslim divine rejected the application of his Muslim subjects at Kurkhet to permit them to use a tank which was in use by the Hindus. Sher Shah Suri had separate inns and wells constructed for the Hindus in order to satisfy their desire of exclusiveness, though it would imply the uncleanliness of Muslims, and Brahmins were appointed in those inns at the State expense to provide food and water separately for the Hindus.

The last Mughal Emperor, Bahadur Shah had equal sympathy for the Hindus and Muslims and to their socio-religious festivals, like many of his predecessors. He stopped slaughter of cows in Delhi and its outskirts. If anyone had violated this Royal Decree and indulged in cow-slaughter, he was even sentenced to death. He entrusted Raja Bholanath with the task to ensure peaceful observation of religious festivals of different communities. Bahadur Shah used to say, "If you are a Muslim you are my one eye, if a Hindu, you are the other." He was a great patriot and martyr to Indian freedom.

Blunt opined, "The slave system had a considerable influence on the composition of the Muslim population, both by means of conversion and inter-marriage. The customs of the original Arab Muslims were to offer a foe that had

surrendered, the choice of conversion or payment of a tribute ; and a foe that had resisted was slain or enslaved". "It is on record that Muhammad-ibn-Qusim dealt with the Hindus in Sind in this manner. Later Muslim conquerors however, seem to have been as a rule, less fanatical. It is said that Sultan Mahmud never made unwilling men converts ; though he broke many Hindu idols, he spared the idolators. Shahab-ud-din Ghori, on the other hand, tried to force Islam on the Hindus. Those who endeared their life more than religion and were timid, were converted into Islam, but those who stood by their ancient faith and defied, were slain by sword. This statement was made about the capture of Koil, but was doubtless true of other towns. Of course, there is nothing to show that his successors followed his example and, since there were few bigots among them, we may reasonably conclude that forced conversion was not unusual, or even unknown at that time.

The number of modern Mohammadan castes that are obviously composed of converts from Hinduism, the number of Hindu castes especially Rajputs, that possess Mohammadan branches, and legends referring such conversions to high antiquity, make it plain that there must have been many changes of religion. These might have occurred in one of the two ways. Many were no doubt voluntary ; as Elphinstone puts it, "The terror of the arms of the Mahommadans and the novelty of their doctrines led many to change their religion. But there can be no doubt that the slave system accounted for the majority of conversions, for naturally Hindus who were sold into slavery and after defeat were compelled, or thought it wise, to accept Islam."

It is learnt from the statement of Keralpati, that Islam entered Kerala as soon as the last Cherumal Perumal embraced Islam. After embracing Islam, he went on a

pilgrimage to Mecca, where it is learnt, he was blessed by the Prophet Muhammad. But on his way back to India, he breathed his last and in a letter he requested his Viceroys to extend all possible help for spread of Islam in Kerala. He also entrusted his work of preaching of Islam in Kerala to a Muslim Durbesh named Malik-bin-Dinar. It was about 839 A.D., when the said Durbesh reached, Kerala Kings extended all possible help to him for preaching of Islam. They built the first mosque at Kottang-Gollur, in India and bore the cost of maintenance of that mosque. It was the first mosque in India. Of course, this fact has little historical authenticity. This is learnt from the traditional account of introduction of Islam in the Malabar coast recorded by Zayn-ud-Din, a historian of the 16th Century. However, the spread of Islam in Kerala was possible owing to the help of Hindu Kings and social reformers. The first church of India was also financed by a Hindu King in the first Christian era, i.e. a few centuries earlier of the establishment of a mosque at Kottang-Gollur in Kerala.

It is interesting to note that the Muppala Muslim soldiers of Kerala were famous for their valour, loyalty and artmanship of war, and were very much dependable. So some Hindu Kings of Calicut made it a rule that at least one male child of every Hindu family of the fisherman community, from its boyhood, should be converted into Islam. That is way, it seems that now the percentage of Muslim population in Calicut is as high as 40 per cent. From this account it is presumed that political necessity lent a hand to spread of Islam in South India. The lower caste people of the Hindu communities of the West Coast became converted into Islam, in a large number, through different ways, including through inter-marriage. Many of them welcomed the coming of Islam as a chance to win a degree of social freedom that Hinduism denied them through its rigid caste system. The Arab traders gradully brought about

the establishment of their faith. So rapid was the process of conversion that took place during the early period of the Muslim era, that had the Portuguese not arrived on the West Coast, the whole of Malabar Coast would have become solely a Muslim country.

The King of Usayfan, a small independent state situated somewhere between Multan and Kashmir during the Caliphate of Muslim (A.D. 833-842) being disgusted of the prayers to an idol which could not save his son's life, attacked the temple and destroyed the idol therein. He also put the priests of the temple to death. This being done, the Hindu King invited a party of Muslim traders who came to him and explained to him the Unity of God, which the king believed in and embraced Islam.

It is not easy to exactly determine the size and the number of wilful conversion and of that made through militant or peaceful zeal of conquerors, traders and missionaries, as there existed some other factors under which many Hindus embraced Islam. They are the oppressive social conditions that afflicted the low caste people since very early time. Besides, the outcastes struggling to escape the insults and degradation imposed upon them by the caste-ridden-society, easily found a welcome freedom by embracing Islam, which practices no outcaste, and permit a prince and a sweeper to worship together in the Abode of the Almighty. As a result, a considerable number of weavers, olimen, water-carriers, leather-workers and sweepers accepted Islam in order to get rid of the curse of casteism. Not only in Bengal, but also in Uttar Pradesh, the Punjab, and Western India, this process of assimilation of low caste Hindus into Muslim fold had been going on for centuries together. A very remarkable illustration of this sort occurred in the north-eastern part of Bengal in the middle of 16th century, which is that the aboriginal tribe known as Keot, who were practically Hinduised, but being treated as outcast embraced Islam.

The door of Islam has always remained open to the Hindus especially those made outcast. If a Muslim falls in love with a Hindu woman and vice versa, which thought to be a love affair and in such cases the the persons affected looked to Islam. In either case, the Hindu can get rid of social ostracizm by accepting Islam, for there can be no union of Muslim women with unbelievers and the Hindu women who enter into such matrimonial alliance through love become Muslim adopting Muslim names and embracing Islam. Besides, after those factors, many lower caste Hindus being influenced by the missionaries accepted Islam, and many Hindu families are known to have accepted Islam for fulfilment of their vows made to some Muslim Saints.

"Though certain aspects of derogatory caste system have influenced the Indian Muslims today, but these social disabilities are not as intensive as in case of the Hindus from whom this inherited evil nature of distinction betwen man and man virtually known as caste features, emerged. But even in the Hindu environment, Islam knows no outcast. And it was one of its strongest assets which, during the Islamic period in India, granted the privilege of brotherhood held out freely to all who would come within the fold of Islam. It is this absence of class prejudices, which constitutes the real strength of Islam in India, and enables it to win so many converts from Hinduism." This comment of Arnold was no doubt true about mass conversions of many Hindus.

Mohammud Mujib said in his book entitled, 'The Indian Muslims'—"The communities belonging to the lower classes did not, on being converted, discard the inherited ideas of caste, and sometimes even maintained caste distinctions tenaciously. Muslims generally recognise or can be made to recognise it as an obligation to sit and eat together. Not only prayer in the mosque, but even the feasts at a marriage has brought the rich and the poor together. The claim of a Muslim to the hospitality of a

brother Muslim has been so openly and universally recognised that it could be regarded as one of the basic characteristics of the Indian Muslim Society."

Force was used on occasions for conversion, but the existing historical evidences do not enable us to estimate either the scale or the effectiveness of such conversion. Also, the risks involved in a policy of conversion by force should not be under-rated. Islam was adopted by the families or groups of families who were regarded as outcastes in Hindu Society because of their degraded profession, or because they had lost caste through association with Muslims in some types of civil employment under the government. Service in the army was an attraction, specially for tribal groups with war-like traditions, and this service made many of them outcastes.

Persuasion also played a part in the case of conversion. The Khojas, the Bohras and the Memans are examples of the conversion of whole communities by Missionaries. Most of the Muslim communities who appear to have been partly converted, have changed their religion because of their beliefs in the miraculous powers of particular Saints.

The communities who used to practise some trades unbefitting the Hindus were made outcastes in the Hindu social system. They sometimes adopted Islam because of the obvious advantages. The main agencies for conversion, were the Mystics, and most of the large-scale conversions seem to have taken place in the Fifteenth and Sixteenth centuries.

The Missionary like Khwajah Muin-ud-Din Chishti, a native of Sistan in East Persia who came to Ajmer, where idolatry prevailed under Hindu rule, converted many Hindus into Muslims. One of his first converts was a Yogi, the spiritual preceptor of the then ruler himself. Being attracted by his fame, Hindus came to him in a large number and being influenced, many of them voluntarily embraced Islam.

Chishti, during his short stay in the city of Delhi, on his way to Ajmer, is said to have converted seven-hundred persons. A legend associated with his coming to India, says, "The Prophet came to him in a dream and said to him, The Almighty has entrusted the country of India to thee. Go there and settle in Ajmer." In pursuance of the verdict of this dream he came to India and settled in Ajmer, where he died in 1236 A. D. The shrines built to perpetuate his memory, is still visited by thousands of pilgrims every year.

Missionary work was carried on in the Punjab, Kashmir, the Deccan, Western India and Eastern India with increasing zeal to spread Islam during the 13th and 14th centuries. Baha-ul-Haq is said to have converted many on the plains of the Western Punjab and Baba Farid-ud-Din is said to have been the means of conversion of some sixteen entire tribes. Bulbul Shah is learnt to have been the first missionary sent to Kashmir. He converted the first Muhammadan King of that country in the early part of the 14th century who took the name, Sadr-ud-Din.

The famous Sayyid Muhammad Gisu Daraz and Pir Mahabir Khandayat worked as missionaries in the Deccan and Western India. The latter in the early 14th century worked amongst the peasants, many of whose forefathers were Jain, and reported to have been converted to Islam by him, while the former worked among the Hindus of the Poona district with success.

During the 15th and 16th centuries, in Sind and Cutch Sayyid Yusuf-ud-Din and Pir Sadr-ud-Din became famous for their missionary activities. The former was a descendant of Abdul-Quader Jilani, who was bidden in a dream by the Prophet to leave Baghdad for India and convert its inhabitants to Islam. He came to Sind in 1422 A. D. and after labouring there for ten years, he succeeded in winning

over to Islam, seven-hundred families of the Lohana caste who followed the example of two of their members. These two men namely Sundarji and Hansraj embraced Islam, after seeing some miracles performed by the Saint, and on their conversion they received the names of Adamji and Taj Mohammed respectively. Under the leadership of the grandson of the former, these people migrated to Cutch where their numbers were increased by converts from among the Cutch Lohanas.

About the year 1430 A. D., Pir Sadr-ud-Din worked in Sind. He worked as Ismaili missionary, who was the head of the Khojah Sect, and made certain concessions to Hindu beliefs and rituals. As a result, he won his first converts in the villages and towns of Upper Sind. He also worked in Cutch from where his doctrines spread up to Bombay.

During the later half of the 15th century, in Gujarat and other parts of India, of two missionaries working there, namely, Imam Shah of Pirana and Dawal Shah Pir, the former is said to have converted a large body of cultivators by bringing about a fall of rain after two seasons of scarcity and drought. On another occasion, meeting a band of Hindu pilgrims passing through Pirana on their way to Banaras, he offered to take them there. They agreed, and in a moment, they were in the Holy City, where they bathed in the Ganges and paid their vows. They then awoke to find themselves still in Pirana, and adopted the faith of the Saint, who could perform such a miracle.

Towards the close of the 15th century, a missionary named Mir Shams-ud-Din, came to Kashmir from Talish on the Caspian Sea. He being a Siah, with the help of his disciples, is said to have converted a large number of people.

According to Arnold, "A group of people of Southern India

known as Deduculas, who live by cotton cleaning (as their name denotes) and by weaving coarse fabrics, attribute their conversion to Baba Fakr-ud-Din, whose tomb they revere at Penukonda. Legend says that he was originally a king of Sistan, who abdicated his throne in favour of his brother, and became a religious mendicant and set out on a proselytizing mission. The legend goes on to say that he finally settled at Penukonda in the vicinity of a Hindu temple, where his presence was unwelcome to the Raja of the place. Instead of applying force, he applied several tests to discover whether the Muhammadan Saint or his own priest was better qualified by sanctity, to possess the temple. As a final test, he tied both of them in sacks filled with lime and threw them into a tank. The Hindu priest died and never reappeared, but Baba Fakr-ud-Din asserted the superiority of his faith by being miraculously transported to a hill outside the town. The Raja hereupon became a Mussalman, and his example was followed by a large number of the inhabitants of the neighbourhood, and the temple was turned into a mosque."

'In the districts of Madura, Tinnevelly, Coimbatore, North Arcot and the Nilgiris, is found another community of an excellent example of group conversion. They are said to have been converted by the preaching of missionaries whose shrines and tombs they venerate even up to present day with his Headquarters at Trichinopoly. Sayid Nathar Shah (A.D. 962-1039) also known as Nadir Shah, who was famous amongst the said missionaries, was said to have converted a large number of Hindus to Islam. He wandered in Arabia, Persia and Northern India. Even today his tomb at South India is a famous place of pilgrimage.' (Madras District Gazetteers, Trichinopoly, I, 338, Madras. 1907).

"On the Malabar coast conversions were made from among the Tiyans, Mikhuvans or fisher-men caste, from the Cheru-

man, or agricultural labourers and other low castes. At Ponani under the auspices of the Minnat-ul-Islam Sabha there are two schools for new converts, one for the boys and another for the girls. It is reported that more than six-thousand converts have passed through these schools since they were organised. They are not only accorded free tuition in the tenets of the new faith, but are given material assistance as well.' (C. I. R., Madras, 1911, XIII, pt, I, 54).

The conversion from Hindu to Muslim has been so numerous that there is a resolute tendency for the Muslims of both the West and East coasts of Southern India, to retain the ancestral type even after they have been converted to the new faith.

Muslim missionaries under the patronage of some sultans succeeded in spreading Islam in Bengal, taking up some socio-religious causes of the Hindus, which made a considerable number of them socially down-trodden. In Eastern Bengal, Islam was not confined to cities and centres of the Govt. only, as in the case of Northern India, but it spread far and wide into the rural areas. "Judging from the manners and customs of the followers of the Prophet, the physical appearance, kind of caste distinctions are found still to be retained by the Muslims of Eastern Bengal. It seems clear that these converts were chosen from the original inhabitants of the Soil." (Rislays', 'The Tribes and Castes of Bengal'.)

In the eastern part of India, Hinduism was not so well-organised and consolidated as in Northern, Western and Southern parts of India. On the other hand, the inhabitants here were under the influence of a crude form of Buddhism and were despised by the proud Aryan rulers. As a result, these people welcomed the Muslim missionaries with a sigh of relief. The following statement of W. W. Hunter is a fair interpretation of the nature and causes of response made

by the people of Eastern Bengal to the activities relating to conversion by the Muslim missionaries.

"To these poor people, fishermen, hunters, pirates, and low caste tillers of the soil, Islam came as a revelation from on high. It was the creed of the ruling race; its missionaries were men of zeal, who brought the Gospel of the Unity of God and equality of men in His sight to a despised and neglectgd population."

The large number of graves and shrines of missionaries in Bengal, bears ample proof how successful they were in spreading Islam here. One of the earliest of these missionaries is Shaykh Jalal-ud-Din Tabrizi of the thirteenth century. He is said to have visited Bengal, where he died in 1244 A.D. With a view to perpetuating his memory, a shrine had been erected after his death, which is still visited by thousands of pilgrims.

Some of the missionaries were successful in preaching Islam because of their wonderful show of magical power and various other miracles and unpretended love and sympathy for the oppressed Hindus. Besides, the Islamic unity of God, banning idolatry and proclaiming equality of all believers, as opposed to the oppressive caste system among the Hindus existing for many centuries which had stagnated the Hindu religion, also were proved as a favourable condition for conversion.

After a temporary lull, there was a remarkable revival of Islam in Bengal during the early part of the nineteenth century. This happened particularly under the influence of the Wahhabi reformers, Haji Shariat Allah and his son Dudhu Miyan, who converted many unbelievers to Islam.

The oppressive social conditions under which the low caste people have had to live not only in Bengal, but also in other parts of India since very early time, are a great contributory factor for conversion to Islam.

The Hindu religion had wide exit, but no entrance,

whereas the door of Islam has always been open to the Hindus, who for some reason or other, have been made outcast. The Hindus combined catholicity in religious outlook with bigotry in social ethics while the Muslims displayed an equal bigotry in religious ideas with catholicity in social behaviour. Besides, there were other factors, such as, many Hindu families accepted Islam after their vows made to some saints, had been fulfilled. Those saints by their divine power granted sons to the couples of those families which had no issuses for long.

Though certain aspects of caste-system are met with among the Indian Muslims today, but social disabilities are not so intensive among them as in the case of the Hindus, from whom they have inherited this evil custom. Even in Hindu environment, Islam has no outcaste anywhere. It is this absence of class prejudices which constitutes the real strengh of Islam in India, and enables it to win so many converts from Hinduism.

The diversity of Islam in India, and East Bengal constitutes one of its most interesting phases. In this respect it suffers from the difficulties of sectarian weakness unlike Christianity. The Christian Church has always maintained a spiritual or ecclesiastical organisation independent of temporal matters ; whereas in theory at least, in Islam, there should be no distinction between temporal and spiritual matters. The two organisations merge into one. The Caliph was not only the Head of the State but was also the Head of the mosque, for Islam under ideal conditions, is not a State Religion, but a Religious State.

The greatest and the best rule of human conduct which Jesus laid down was "Love thy neighbour as thyself". There is no better proof of the identity in spirit of Christianity and Islam, than the confirmation of Christ's command by Muhammad himself. "No one will be a faithful Muslim until he loves his neighbour as he loves himself", said the

Prophet Muhammad. There would exist no difierence between the two religions, if the metaphysical doctrines engrafted into both, be eliminated, as both recognise that the source of virtue is love. Islam is presented as the religion of peace, toleration, charity and brotherhood. The verse most often quoted in support of this proposition is, "Let there be no compulsion in religion (Surah II, 257)". Proselytism by sword, is held by some to be wholly contrary to the instructions of Muhammad; not did Islam consecrete slavery, but rather proclaimed the natural equality of all human being.

A good number of Munsis or Fakirs (Mendicants) having supernatural potentiality, were in a postion to cure some diseases. Naturally, in times of crisis, a large number of people being attracted by such persons of divine potentiality, gradually showed tolerance to Islam, and in some cases, ultimately accepted the faith.

According to Abdul Karim, the author of the book entitled, 'Social History of the Muslim in Bengal'—"The spread of Islam in Bengal was a gradual process. As the number of immigrants into Bengal was not considerably high, it was all the more necessary to win over the support of the local people, either by converting them or by pacifying them. This necessity implied to make some sorts of compromise with the local customs and beliefs. And fortunately the problem was not so difficult for Islam in Bengal, because there had always been preponderance of non-Aryan population in the region. Buddhism had been a great competitor of Hinduism throughout the pre-Muslim period. The non-Aryan elements had somehow identified themselves with the degraded Buddhism of the pre-Muslim period. The lower caste people were highly oppressed by the higher caste people who often made them outcast on some trivial grounds. They were desirous of getting rid of the curse of casteism. When such a keen rivalry was raging in the country, Islam appeared

as a relieving force, in which many found an easy opening to success and salvation. All Muslims, however, poor or rich, can dine together and pray to Allah on the same platform. There seems to have been mass conversion in Bengal brought about by some Muslim Saints. These converts retained their long-inherited customs, beliefs, and even love for old Hindu epics. Even in the late 16th century, the Bengali poet Sayyid Sultan complains of the Muslim masses, more devotion to Hindu literature than to the Quran and other Islamic subjects. Such being the state of affairs, it is not unnatural to expect that many popular elements have crept into the general beliefs of Islam in Bengal. Of course, it is not that Islam in the orthodox form was not practised at all."

Aziz Ahmad in his book 'Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment' states, "Economic betterment did not necessarily follow the conversion of Hindus to the new faith. Most of them retained their skilled or non-skilled ancestral professions, and thus brought into Islam some vague features of caste distinction. Artisan classes and petty merchants were perhaps the first to accept Islam. Agriculture was not a favourite profession with the Muslim, except in those areas, where the greater majority of population had accepted Islam, as in Bengal, and some parts of India. In rural India, the Muslim convert continued to associate with the Hindu of his caste, often had Hindu wives, and continued to observe Hindu rites and customs."

In the case of Muslim synthetic sects, which are less numerous. Hindu elements are usually survivals of Hindu rituals after their conversion to Islam. Thus. Malkhanas, who are converts from various Hindu sub-castes like, the Rajputs, the Banyas, and Jats, have retained many Hindu practices. They have retained Hindu names; they visit Hindu temples for personal ceremonies and greet each other in the Hindu manner. But they pray in Muslim mosques,

practise circumcision and bury their dead. Among the half-converted Muslims there are Churihara s in the Ganges Valley, who worship the Hindu deity, Kalka Mai.

There is a far reaching effect of incomplete conversion in the Hindu, Muslim and Christian Societies in India.

According to Murray T. Titus, "In India, where majority of the Muslim population has originated from Hindu caste and outcaste groups by mass conversion, whether for fear of military power or to attain some desired object, or due to persuasion, complete Islamization of the converts has not been accomplished. There are yet large sections of the Muslim community, here and there; which reveal their Hindu origin in their religious and social life almost at every stage, constituting a curious mixture of the old and the new. There is little wonder that these should be so. The Muslim armies moved over the country in wave after wave for centuries, from Peshwar to Dacca and beyond, and from the Himalayas to the southern-most end of the peninsula. It often happened that hastily converted people were left behind after the army moved on. These converts had been given scant instruction in the new faith and were left to remember and practise whatever they could."

The impact of the old idolatrous surroundings upon them was great. Not only their neighbours, but many of their relatives in other places are still Hindu. It is little wonder, therefore, that the worship of the village godlings was performed as before, that animistic beliefs continued, that Brahmin priests were still employed and Hindu festivals observed. The wonder is, not that these hereditary customs and beliefs were adhered to, but that any belief in Islam remained at all.

In one of the earliest records of official recognition we find the existence of mixed customs and beliefs among village-Muslims. These had been made during the reign of Emperor Jahangir, when once he was visiting Kashmir, it is said, he

found at Rajaur, a village on the Jhelum, some Muslims who were originally Hindus, but their chiefs were still styled as Rajas. Hindu customs were still observed, such as, burning of widows and inter-marriage with Hindus were practised. The Emperor tried to mend these deviations and issued orders prohibiting such practices in future. Infliction of suitable punishments was enjoined for infraction of those orders (Waziat-i-Jahangiri, E.D., VI, 376). However, from the evidences that are still found in certain quarters of Muslim in India, chiefly in the remote village areas, at a distance from the influence of the Ulemas, it is apparent that such prohibition was of no effect and all the king's horsemen were not able to bring about the desired reforms.

Let us now take a glance at a few of these groups, that show the characteristics of incomplete conversion prominently, and then proceed to a closer consideration of the main religious and social phenomena resulting out of this. The Malkhana community is the best-known of these groups in North India, a description of whom is quoted below from the report of Blunt who was the Census Officer of the United Provinces in 1911. It reads :

"There are converted Hindus of various castes, belonging to Agra and adjoining districts, chiefly Muttra, Etha and Mainpuri. They are of Rajput, Jat and Banuta descent. They are reluctant to describe themselves as Muslims and generally give their caste name, and scarcely recognise the name Malkhana. Their names are mostly Hindu ; they mostly worship at Hindu temple. They use the form of salutation, 'Ram Ram' and inter-marry mostly among themselves only. On the other hand, they sometime frequent a mosque, practise circumcision, bury their dead ; and they eat with Muslims, if they happen to be particular friends. They prefer to be addressed as 'Miyan Thakur'. They admit that they are

neither Hindus nor Muslims, but a mixture of both". (C.I.R. 1911, Vol. I Pt. 1,118.)

Md. Aziz said in his book, 'Studies in Islamic Culture in the Indian Environment' that incomplete conversion is a channel through which un-Islamic practices passed into Indian Islam.

Incomplete conversion in the rural districts of Bengal left the converted people there as only nominal followers of the faith. This condition was also found among Christian converts of the province. The ignorance of these half-converted Muslims is clearly manifested in a statement made to a missionary by the headman of a Muslim village in Bengal during the first-half of the nineteenth century— That Muhammad was a Bengali, born in the house of a Brahmin."

With the passing of the Diwani into the hands of East India Company, great changes took place. The Kazis stripped of their powers were no longer a terror, or could convert the people by threat. The ignorant Muslims in the densely populated interior part of the districts, were thus left free to incorporate corrupt practices and customs in their religious and social life. For three generations, these people, ' without a shepherd ' receded more and more from their national faith and conformed to every superstitious rite of the Hindus.

Under the oppression of higher caste people, the community of Nath Jogi in Bengal embraced Islam. The Jogi priests who accepted Islam, could not give up their rituals even after their conversion to Islam. But they had to maintain some rituals outwardly with the Muslim Pirs.

The Chitrakars (Painters) are converted Muslims. They are now living scattered in many parts of the districts of Birbhum, Midnapur and Bankura in West Bengal. But there lies a peculiar similarity with the Hindus in respect of socio-religious rituals among them. They believe that they being cursed by the Brahmins, had been treated as down trodden in the eye of the society. They worship like the Hindus,

but they practise Namaz (prayer) like the Muslims. At first, they were Hindus, but being looked down upon by the higher caste Hindus, they embraced Islam. Before conversion, they used to practise Hindu rituals. That was why, they, after their conversion, could not give up the rituals of their pre-conversion stage. This converted group of people observe the other rituals of the Hindus, along with practising 'Namaz'. Their married women use vermilion on their forehead. They indulge in both worship and 'Namaz' (prayer) to Allah, which is the direct effect of the curse bestowed upon them by the Brahmins. Once they drank wine profusely, as it was the main sacrifice in the worshig of Dharmaraj Thakur. Of course, drinking of wine is still persisting in the locality they reside in. The low caste people like fisherman, Bauri, Hadi, Dom, etc. participate in that festival. The Chitrakar Families at first garland the pot of wine placed at the centre of the courtyard during the festival. They also earn money by showing the activities of Lord Sri Krishna, as depicted in "Krishner Janmalila" and "Janmastami" (birth ceremony of Sri Krishna). "Nani Churi" (stealing of cream) is dramatised by them colourfully. From all these activities it is revealed that the Chitrakar families, in ancient time, were a branch of Nishads (hunters), who used to live along the border of West Bengal, and in course of time, they were included in the Hindu Society and made their place in the lowest strata of that society. They had undergone many social oppressions and ill-treatments for ages, at the hands of the higher caste Hindus, yet they maintained their originality like other castes in the Hindu society, and helped the spread of Hindu culture by singing the episodes of the Ramayana and the Mahabharata in village fairs, where they used to show their "*Pots*" inlaid with pictures. Through their drawings, they made in comic an expression of social evils. Due to being looked down upon by the Hindus, they embraced Islam and Gazi Saheb became later on, their objects of drawing. There is a social link among

the Chitrakar families residing in some parts of Midnapur and Diamond Harbour, Baruipur in the District of 24-Parganas.

Many Chitrakar families are found to live in Kumirmara in the Nandigram Police Station of Tamluk Subdivision. They also live in Chetua-Daspur and Chetua-Basudevpur and Nirvanpur of Midnapur. They live a very poor life.

The Chitrakar families of Birbhum and Midnapur, in spite of their conversion to Islam, observe almost all the Hindu rituals. They do not go to mosque, but perform 'Namaz' at home. They have no marital relation with the Muslims and marry within their own community. Of course, Maulavis solemnise their marriage. At first, they used to practise circumcision. But now they do not practise the same.

In Nirvanpur, adjacent to Chetua-Basudevpur, there are some Pat dar families, where there is a broken small mosque, whereas no such mosque was found anywhere in the other two adjacent villages. The members of the Patidar families, known as sons of Viswakarma (a Hindu God), even now offer puja to Viswakarma and female folk offer puja to Goddess Lakshmi on the last day of the month of Bhadra (August-September), and those who are out and out Muslims, earn their livelihood by showing their scrolls containing pictures from the Hindu epics. In West Bengal, the Patua families, in spite of their conversion to Islam, earn their livelihood by singing in verse, the episodes of the Hindu Gods and Goddesses. They are outcaste in the Hindu society. The Patidar society of Midnapur is wide-spread. In the subdivisions of Ghatal in Midnapur, and Arambag in Hooghly, and in Sarisha, Sonarpur, etc. of South 24-Parganas and in Calcutta, there are many Patua families. There are other types of converted Muslims known as Kalmadar who hunt birds. Like the Chitrakar or Patua, they also practise 'Namaz'. There are some Kalmadar families in the Districts of Mindnapur and Hooghly.

The fact of incomplete conversinn of the illiterate village-folk who were mostly lower caste people, is further

supported by the following verse of a noted Muslim writer regarding popularity of the Mahabharata among the Hindus and Muslims :

"Hindu Mochhalman Taha Ghare Ghare Rakhe—
Khoda Rasuler Katha Keho Na Songare."

Free Translation :

"The Hindus and Muslims keep that book in every home. Alas ! they do not follow the commandments of Khoda Rasul God and His Messenger)."

In the religious life of the illiterate and partly conerv-ted Muslim masses of the villages of India, the remnants of earlier beliefs and practices form a long list, and an attempt has been made to give here in this book a broad description of the same.

II

From ancient time Bengal was divided into different parts like Rarh, Barendra and Bangadesh. Lakshmana Sena was the ruler of Bengal when Bakhtiyar invaded the land. He held his court in the city of Nadia. It is learnt from the "Tabaquot-i-Nasiri" that the cities like Nadia and Luckhna-wati were in Rarh. The kingdom of Lakshmana Sena had two wings on either side of the Ganges. The city of Luckhna-wati was situated on the western wing called as Rarh and the city of Deokot was on the eastern wing named as Barend or Barendal.

The people of Bengal, before the advent of the Aryan into India, were of Proto-Australoid or Austric types. With them was mixed the second wave of migration of the Dravidians of the Mediterranean stock. The last to arrive, were the Alpines from Europe who were akin racially and culturally to the Vedic Aryans. Bengal fell a prey to successive invasions from outside its boundary. It was during

the suzerainty of the King Lakshmana Sena that the first invasion of the Muslim Turks in Bengal took place, and thereafter the whole Bengal gradually passed under the Muslim rule putting an end to one epoch in the history of Bengal.

It is found mentioned in 'Tarikh-i-Farishta' (Chapter VII) that in the year 690 A.H., corresponding with 1203 A. D., the first Mohammadan conquest was effected by Bakhtiyar Khilji under the control of Kutub-ud-din-Aibak, who was the then Emperor of Delhi. Bakhtiyar Khilji invaded Bengal in 1203 A. D. and conquered the tracts namely Rarh and Barendah.

As to old legend regarding capture of Hindu suzerainty by a Muslim invader, 'Tabqat-i-Nasiri' speaks that a certain number of astrologers and Brahmins told the King Lakshmana Sena that in the books of their ancient sages it was foretold that the country would fall into the hands of the Turks and when that time should come, the reigning king should submit to Muslim; so that the indigenous people might escape the molestation to be indulged in by the invaders. They further told that the indications of this leader would be that when he would stand upright and keep his hands down along his sides, his fingers would reach beyond the point of his knee-joint which Muhammad Bakhtiyar was reported to have had been in possession of. So the report of arrival of Baktiyar created a great commotion among the Brahmins, wisemen, chiefs and lords of the country. They retired in all haste to Jajnagar (Orissa), Kamroop (Assam) and other remote places which promised a safe and secure asylum to them. In fine, almost all the higher caste people quitted their homes and settled in other provinces. But the low caste Hindus, who thought Islam would be a revelation from on high to save them from their socially depressed as well as economically degraded status, did not leave their homes. Of course, the king lingered in his capital and did not relin-

quish his hereditary dominions as well as his palace until he had been bound to flee when Bakhtiyar attacked him, and entered his capital city of Nadia and penetrated straight to the very gate of his palace. The king fled towards Bikrampore in Bangladesh. Bakhtiyar afterwards subjugated Luckhnawati and other territories and caused the Khutba to be read. He also struck coins in his name. On the authority of Dr. Blockman, Sir W. Hunter has stated in his statistical Accounts of Dacca that the provinces of Barendah and Rarh were conquered by the Musalmans in 1203 A.D. In 1330 A.D. the eastern tract called Bangadesh, was subjugated by Mahammad Tughlak Shah. He made Gour, Satgaon and Sonargaon respectively the seats of his Government.

From the time of Bakhtiyar Khilji's rule in Bengal down to that of Kadr Khan, the Emperor of Delhi appointed many Viceroys to govern Bengal. In 1340 A.D., Sultan Fakr-uddin declared independence of Bengal which lasted till it was subverted by Akbar in 1576 A.D. after the defeat of its ruler Daud Shah. From this time down to the year 1765 A.D. when East India Company obtained the Diwani of Bengal, the country remained subject to the control of the Mughal Empire. But even during this interval when Nadir Shah, the king of Iran invaded India in the reign of Emperor Mahmud Shah, Sujakhan who was the then Governor of Bengal assumed independence by throwing off this allegiance to the throne of Delhi. Bengal retained its independence intact until it passed into the hands of the English. Of course, Plassey became a turning point in the history of Benlga and of India.

During the long period of 562 years since advent of the Muslims down to that of the English in this country, different Muslim dynasties held in succession the Imperial sway at Delhi. The period during which Mohamud Bakhtiyar conquered Bengal, was that of the Ghorian dynasty which came to an end with the reign of Kykobad. In 1288 A. D. it was

succeeded by the Khilji dynasty which in turn gave place in 1321 to the Tughluk dynasty which ruled until 1414. The Tughluk dynasty was replaced in 1526 by the Mughul dynasty or the House of Timoor. During this long period of Muslim, dependency in Bengal the natives of this country, either from compulsion or from free will, were converted into Islam in any appreciable number.

H. Beverley in his Census Report of Bengal for 1871 (P, 132, para 348) stated that the real explanation of the immense preponderance of the Islamic religious element in this portion of the delta was due to conversion to Islam of the numerous low caste Hindus who occupied it. Some Mohammedan invaders were ready to make conquests with the Quran along with swords. It is said, for instance, that under the suzerainty of Sultan Jalal-ud-din the Hindus were almost to extermination. The exclusive Hindu caste system, again, naturally encouraged the conversion of the lower orders from a religion under which those low caste people were no better than despised out-castes, to Islam which recognises all men as equals. The greater number of Musalmans located between Gour and Ghoraghat also adds possibility to this supposition. Though history is unfortunately silent on the matter of conversion yet, it is sure that coversion was very largely carried on in Bengal, the only explanation of which is the existence of a very large percentage of Mahommedans there, who even at persent occupy the same social position as their Hindu neighbours and observe almost all the socio-religious rituals and have belief in many religious practices and festivals of their Hindu forefathers.

In para 353 of the Census Report of Bengal, 1871, Beverley stated that the Muslim invasion found Hinduism resting on weak and uncertain foundations and had a feeble hold over the minds and affections of a great bulk of the inhabitants. So far from displacing the indigenous children of the soil the Aryan element was able only to hold its own by importing

fresh blood from Upper India. The Hindu religion assimilated and adopted many barbarous practices and superstitions of the aborigines which is sought to embrace within its own folds. At the same time these indigenous people found themselves occupying the position of serfs whom the superior race had overcome. These people had a degraded position in social system of the latter. They were generally the hewers of wood and drawers of water for a set of masters in whose eyes they were like unclean beasts and altogether abominable. Hemmed in by sea, it was no longer open to them to retire further before the face of the Aryans. But when the Muslim conquerers invaded the lower delta with the sword and the Quran it may well be conceived that those Muslim conquerers were not altogether unwelcome to the indigenous low caste people, as they had brought with them a religion and social system under which instead of being a de pised and outcaste race the same amphibious aborigines of Bengal, might occupy as a rival if not as an equal, the position to them of their late Hindu masters. From this fact it can easily be assumed that a very little persecution was required to change the faith of these miserable helots of Bengal and persecution hardly succeeds in changing one's faith. Besides, times and circumstances of the country must have demanded revolution before change in religion can be brought about by persecution alone, the application of which was hardly met with in effecting conversion among the low caste people of the South Bengal where Islam spread through the missionary activities of the Muslim Pirs and Gazis.

In Behar conversion through persecution was not successul because Hinduism there was too strong to repel it. But in Bengal Hinduism succumbed to spread of Islam among the low caste people to whom the Hindu religious Pandits denied social justice of equity. As a result, a great mass of the low caste people embraced Islam simply to escape from the then persisting ignoble social status under the Hindu caste system.

In para 353 of the Census Report of Bengal, 1871. Beverley states, "If further proofs were wanted of the position of the Musalmans of the Bengal delta who owe their origin to conversion rather than to the introduction of foreign blood, it seems to be afforded in the close resemblance between them and their fellow countrymen who still form the low caste Hindus. That both are original of the same race seems sufficiently clear, not merely from their possessing identically the same physique but from the similarity of the manners and customs which characterise them."

In para 354 he further states, "But place of a Chandal or a Rajbansee and a Bengali Musalman together were the same and if not for some peculiarity of dress or the mode of cutting hair, it would be difficult to distinguish the one from another. The probability is their one and the same race, and only within the last few centuries they have ceased to profess the same religion."

H. Beverley's comment as to large scale conversion of the lower caste Hindus to Islam can be supported on the grounds that the lower caste Hindus embraced Islam for their having no place in a respectable Hindu society but owing to their being a general equality of position and absence of rigid social gradation in Islam. In the Hindu caste system the upper caste Hindus do not like to sit together in the same row and pray in the same temple with the lower caste people, where as in Islam though there is a nominal social gradation, yet Islam is devoid of Bramhanic exclusiveness and all Muslims can dine and pray together.

Communities belonging to the lower classes did not, on being converted, discard or grow out of their inherited ideas of caste and sometimes even maintained caste distinction tenaciously. Muslims generally recognize or can be made to recognize it as an obligation to sit and eat together. Not only prayer in the mosque, but even the feast at

marrige, has brought the rich and the poor together. The claim of a Muslim to the hospitality of a brother Muslim, has been so openly and universally recognised that it can be regarded as one of the basic characteristics of Indian Muslim society. When the Muslim invaders appeared in some parts of Bengal with a sword in one hand and the Quran on the other hand, many upper class Hindus fled to Kamrup (Assam) and Jajngar (Orissa) for their safety and to avoid the rigour of compulsory Islamic proselytism and many who were economically well off, did not flee and could protect themselves by their wealth and guard from the Muslim invaders. But the lower caste people for economic reasons as well as social degradation did not feel the necessity of leaving their birth places and thought Islam to be a revelation from on high. During Muslim period temptation could not attract the upper class Hindus. It is during the British period Michael Madhusudan Datta, Rev. Krishna Mohan Bandyopadhyaya etc. and a few others of the upper strata embraced Christianity being fascinated by the western civilization But many of them ultimately failed to achieve their very objectives. Without raising the question of similarity in physical features of the converted Muslims, converted Christians, and Scheduled caste Hindus at least of South Bengal, it can be concluded safely that there is a great similarity in the mode of livelihood relating particularly to use of mother tongue, dress, cutting of hair and in observance of socio-religious rituals and festivals of the Muslims, Christians and other lower caste people of the region. Aziz Ahmad in his book, 'Islamic culture in the Indian environment' writes—"From the 13th century onwards sufi missionaries, who spread all over India met with considerable success among the lower castes of the Hindus for whom conversion to Islam meant release from the humiliating disadvantages of belonging to an inferior social group. Brahmanical formalism could hardly rise to the

occasion to meet this challenge of conversion to Islam in the lower strata of Hindu Society." But in the scurces of the Bhakti movement there was already a suggestion of the possibility of transcending the caste system. According to the Bhagavad Gita, in the sight of Gcd all devotees are equal, whether they are born in sin or to whatever caste or sect they may belong.

When Hinduism was put to danger for its narrowness of casteism, inequality among men and idolatrous tendency, Sri Chaitanya, Nanak, Ramananda and Dadu tried their best to narrow the distinction between Hinduism and Islam by discarding casteism and uncompromising ideas among different religious faiths and they also started preaching Bhaktibad which believes in equality of man, love for all human being irrespective of caste and creed, and oneness of God. In course of time, Bhakti movement put a check to conversion to Islam and it started reconversion of Muslim to Bhakti Hinduism whose denunciation of the caste system was as much as an inspiration of Muslim example as a response to its pull of conversion. Ramananda, the chief inspirer of the worship of Rama had Muslim disciples. The Krishna cult specially attracted some Muslims and this cult which gave rise to the Vaishnavism also attracted many lower caste people as it did not follow rigid Hindu caste system and in it the preceptor and the common devotees can dine together and pray to God and recite Kirtan (uttering of the names of Hindu God and Goddess) together on the same platform. The Bhakti movement specially under the influence of Chaitanya in Bengal encouraged reconversion of some Muslims to Hindus. Besides, Chaitanya had some Muslim disciples of whom Jaban Haridas was noteworthy.

Likewise, at a later stage, when Christian proselytism was started specially by the missionaries on temptation and allurement of better economic and casteless social life, many lower caste people in order to avoid degradation and be well

placed in life and a few upper caste people for much better livelihood, embraced Christianity. Then the Brahma Samaj put a check on conversion of Hindus specially the upper class Hindus to Christianity. Besides, in the nineteenth century Arya Samaj also started reconversion from Islam and Christianity to Hinduism through the process known as Suddhwi' aran (purification).

The Islamization of Bengal started from A.D. 1202 after the Ghurid conquest. Then Muslim Governors had their head-quarters at Gour. Jadu Sen, the son of Raja Ganesh ascended the throne in A. D. 1414 with the name of Jalal-ud-din Muhammad Shah. Murshid Quli Khan founded the line of the Nawabs of Murshidabad. They converted many Hindus into Muslims. The majority of the Muslims, apart from the Pathans, was composed of Bengali converts like Shayikhs who came from the low-caste Jolahas and out-castes. The greater part of Bengal was then inhabited by Sunnis of the Hamalite School. There were a few Shiahs at Dacca and Burdwan. The low castes of the southern and eastern parts of Bengal professed an aggressive and fanatical form of Islam, and were termed Wahhabis; notably the sects of the Faraidiyah, founded by Shariat Allah, and his son, Dudhu Miyan (A. D. 1862) who attacked British forces and rejected saint worship. They were found in the villages and were often called Salafiyah or Ghayr-muq-allid. There were very important Waqfs in Bengal.

III

Some accounts of Hindu resistence to the conversion are obtainable from historical records. Of these, the attempts of Raja Danuj Ray, Raja Narayan and Sri Chaitanya are important.

From 1202 to 1281 A. D., North Bengal and a part of West Bengal were held in a sort of military occupation. Ghias-ud-din Balban, the Sultan of Delhi, had to negotiate with Danuj Ray, the Hindu Chief of Sunargaon in order

to prevent the rebel Bengal Governor Tughril's escape by river. But things began to change with the accession of Nasir-ud-din, son of Balban, as the Nawab of Bengal. The Muslim began to spread in all directions. Militant Fakirs began actively to preach Islam. The petty Hindu Chieftains all over the country naturally opposed the Muslim aggression, but were subjugated one by one. Their defeats happened at the hands of the Muhammadan free-lance Mullahs, who carried on proselytisation with the full backing of the State power.

Salatin says that "Rajah Kans, a Hindu zemindar, subjugating the whole Kingdom of Bengal, seated himself on the throne and commenced oppression, and seeking to destroy the Mussalmans, slew many of their learned and holy men. His aim was to extirpate Islam from his domination". Westerncott identified Rajah Kans with Raja Ganesh of Dinajpur, but Blockman identified him with Rajah Kans Narayan of Tahirpur, which is included in Bhathuria. Riaz gives the best account based on local traditions and clearly states that he was a zeminder of Bhathuria. He identifies Bhathuria as a part of old Barendra, in Rajshahi proper, between Amrul and Bagura which signified northern Rajshahi proper and included Tahirpur. Blockman also considers that the name of "Rajshahi" is connected with Rajah Kans, who was a Raja Shah, that is a Hindu Rajah who had ascended a Mussalman throne. According to the testimony of coins, Rajah Kans reigned from 1407 to 1414 A. D. Bhattasali identifies Kans as Raja Ganesh and says that Danujmarddanadeva and Raja Ganesh must have been the same person.

The attempt to exterminate Islam in Bengal was a direct reaction to the terrible methods of forcible, conversion followed by some Muslims rulers. During the reign of Hussain Shah, in the first quarter of the 16th century, serious conflicts of conversion and reconversion through bloodshed practically came to an end. Probably it was realised that killing and

terrorisation were not enough to convert the entire people of the province into the new faith, or to exterminate Muslims from the province. During Hussain Shah's reign, some amount of tolerance was attempted. His reign may be compared in many respects with that of Akbar.

The most notable feature of this period is the reconversion movement launched by Sri Chaitanya. He followed generally the path of love, peace and fraternity, but had no objection to a show of force in order to demoralise the Kazis. Although Hussain Shah had been preaching and practising tolerance in his Court, conflicts and riots were not infrequent in the countryside.

Sri Chaitanya turned a new leaf in the history of Hindu-Muslim conflicts in Bengnl. He evidently felt that the number of Muslims had become too large to admit of an attempt to exterminate them as Rajah Kans had tried to do. But he realised that State killings, communal riots and forcible conversions that were taking place, threatened the very existence of Hinduism in Bengal and that something must be done to stop these. The Hindus were living in great terror and their religious practices had virtually been given up and they were afraid to worship their gods and goddesses in public.

In Eastern Bengal, Hindu religious practices had practically been wiped out. The Kazis were all powerful in the land and the Hindus lived in mortal fear of them. Sri Chaitanya launched a movement which seems to have two objectives—to restore the morale of the Hindus and to stem the tide of Islamisation by reconverting Muslims into Hindu fold. The rigidity that the Hindu caste system had acquired by this time through an effort to contract itself into a shell that would stand the onslaughts of Islam, provided the greatest hindrance to his new move. He, therefore, revolted against the caste system and declared that in the eye of God all human beings were equal. The ground for receiving the proselytes was thus prepared.

In South Bengal there were some feudal kings almost independent of any sovereign power. The people of this area played an important role when King Pratapaditya fought against the Mughal Army. Besides, the indigenous people of this region had an ingrained apathy towards Hindu casteism which differentiated man from man. Therefore, their born-aversion towards the oppression of the caste Hindus as well as the introduction of untouchability in this locality which kept a large number of the inhabitants down trodden, practically led a large number of this class of people such as, Rajbanshi, Tiyar, Kaora, etc. of this locality to professing Islam. These people ethnologically resemble mostly the Dravido-Australoid types. Inspite of their conversion to Islam, they could not bid good-bye for ever, to their parental socio religious rituals, as they have daily intercourse with their Hindu fellow caste-brethren.

The proverb goes 'Customs die hard' and this adage bears the hint of the relation that exists between culture and biology. Some fanatical Muslim rulers had destroyed the images of many Hindu gods and goddesses, and religious books and manuscripts, but by doing so, they could not annihilate Hindu culture and rituals. On the contrary, they had adopted many of the Hindu rituals and thereby proved their invincible spirit.

The Muslims began to move into the western border of Bengal, specially into the districts of Birbhum etc. after the invasion of Bakhtyar. Many Muslims of these districts take part in the festivals and feasts of the Hindus. The author had talks with them and found them well-conversant with the remarkable and noticeable temples and images of the gods and goddesses of the Hindus of those areas. Again by excavating some ponds of those villages many images of gods like, Vishnu Ganesh and many such were discovered there.

The main centre of Buddhism was in the east and north Bengal, and it was easy to convert the Buddhists to Islam

for their innate hatred against the Hindus. Inspite of the predominance of Buddhism in West Bengal, the Hindus nearly absorbed it into their religion. The Dharma Thakur of West Bengal is perhaps a curious historical proof of synthesis and religious intercourse. Dharma Th kur and Sri Chaitanya mainly resisted spread of Islam in Bengal. But it became easy for the Muslim Pirs and saints to spread easy hold over the places where Buddhists Tantrics held supremacy.

In some villages, even at present the Mohammedans make votive offering of goat to the deities without any prejudice. These inter-communal worships indicate that an uninterrupted course of cultural harmony has passed over the Rarh of Bengal from the prehistoric period, radiating through the Buddhist, Hindu, Muslim and Christian era.

There are many recorded histories of conversion of the Hindus to Islam. During this period, Hindus of various caste-groups were converted into Muslims. At that time, the dangerous and reactionary state of the Brahmanya religion became so gross, that in the society, a large number of Hindus, excepting the Brahmins, Baidyas and Kayasthas, owed a little allegience to the Hindu Brahmanya religion. Due to the fanatic feelings of the Brahmanya religion, a large part of the Hindu society was treated as untouchable and degraded. Their mass conversion to Islam was nothing but a revelation of the oppression of the reactionary Hindu groups, while on the other hand, there was a generous democratic appeal from the side of the Islam religion, in which there was no differcence between man and man. Due to the fanatic feelings and rigid casteism of the Brahmanya religion, a large number of degraded people did not hesitate to respond to the call of Islam and were converted into Muslims.

Amidst the harmful and horried communal conflicts as are found to flare up from time to time in some parts specially where the Muslims reside quite isolately near a Hindu inhabited area with least regards to each others' socio-religious rituals and festivals of this country, a communal harmony is still persisting unstained and unhampered in some parts of Bengal where the Hindus, Muslims, Christians live together quite friendly with due regard to each others' socio-religious rituals and festivals.

The Byaghra debata (Tiger god) and Dakshin Roy of Dhapdhapi, and the famous Altar of Gaji Saheb or Peer Shaheb at Ghutiari Sarif etc. are included within the Debottar and Pirottar properties of the Roy Choudhuries of Sonarpur. Sonarpur which is about 10 miles south of Calcutta and Ghutiari Sarif, a place situated on the branch line of the Eastern Railway from Sonarpur to Canning, are famous holy places to many Hindus and Muslims. The sacred altar or Dargah and mosque of Pirgazi Mobarak Ali are situated at Ghutiari Sarif. Gazi Saheb breathed his last here, and the Roy Choudhuries of Baruipur founded this Dargah. Every year, during Ambubachi, a large fair or festival is held here, in which thousands of Hindus and Muslims get together. Even now, both the Hindus and the Muslims offer ritual service to the Dargah after the first service has been offered by the Roy Choudhury Family, as in the case of offering worship in the Kali and Siva temples, first by the local zemindar.

Ghutiari Sarif under Sonarpur Police Station in the district of 24-Parganas is a famous holy place of South Bengal. There is a notable friendly feeling among many Hindus and Muslims. A strange reconciliation amongst all religions is still persisting at Baruipur of 24-Parganas in the midst of multifarious gods and goddesses.

V

When internal peace of the Kingdom of Lakshan Sena had been lost, the feudals within his kingdom revolted and declared themselves independent. On the other hand, the central administration was being disintegrated on various grounds. The main ground was the invidious policy of casteism and distinction among the people. A large number of the population of Bengal probably had no support for the rigid policy of casteism introduced by the Sena Dynasty.

The Poundra Kshatriya, Raj Bangshi, Tiyar and Kaora etc. of South 24-Parganas District were once very powerful and ruled their own land. So the possibility of conflict, specially in respect of socio-religious grounds, with the Sena Kings of the Carnatic Dynasty, could not be altogether ruled out or discarded. Khari of South Sunderbans was possibly the main centre of that conflict.

During the Muslim regime the rulers could not find it easy to establish sovereign power or right over South Bengal. The same thing also happened during the Pathan rules. The Hindu feudals were ruling almost independently in the southern part of the District of 24-Parganas.

The author of the Chaitanya Bhagabat mentioned the name of Ram Chandra Khan, who was also a powerful feudal landlord. There had been a meeting between Sri Chaitanya and Ram Chandra, on the former's way to Nilachal at Chhatrabhoga situated a couple of miles away from the village of Khari. The local people declared him as the ruler of South Bengal and fought for his territorial sovereignty. He was a powerful ruler of South Bengal.

During the Mughal period, when King Pratapaditya came in conflict with the Mughal Army, South Bengal played an important role.

The common people belonging specially to Scheduled Caste community of South Bengal had no support for casteism,

which is evident from the mass conversion of the low caste Hindus like Tiyar, Kaora, Rajbanshi, etc. of that area to Islam. Under Koulinya and Meithack Systems, the Hindus who were considered as low caste and deemed as untouchables and had to undergo various social disabilities, embraced Islam on the one hand, and Christianity on the other, having a strong aversion for such treatment.

VI

From the evidence or deeds of the Temple of Jateswar Nath, even today it is revealed that the community of Nath Jogis has maintained their cultural tradition in the south Rarh, where they are the priests of gods and goddesses like, Dharam Thakur, Panchanan, Sitala, Siva, Kali etc. At Bauria in the District of Howrah, there is a temple of Nath Jogis.

Under the oppression of higher caste people, many of the community of Nath Jogis embraced Islam. The Jogi priests who accepted Islam, could not give up their traditional rituals even after their conversion to Islam. But they had to maintain some rituals outwardly for fear of Muslim Pirs.

There is a close resemblance between the Hindu Jogis (saints) and Muslim Pirs (saints). The Muslim Pirs took an active part in the Muslim administration and preaching of Islam. They had to face difficulties with the village folk-deities, the worship of which was an exclusive right of the poor illiterate low caste people. Among the Muslim converts, there were a large number of Buddhists who were primarily converted from the low caste Hindus into Buddhism. Later on, many Buddhists appear to have been fused with the Trantic Cults. There was a large number of converts who were worshippers of trees, animals and ghosts or some evil-spirits.

Gazi Sahebs had to face a great difficulty with the folk-deities as these dieties used to receive offer from the poor devotees in poor huts or under trees, in a very poorly condition, without having any pomp and grandeur. The Gazis and Muslim rulers had not faced so much difficulties in demolishing temples. But they failed to abolish the worship of folk-deities like Bara Thakur Panchanan Thakur, Sitala, Olai Chandi, Olabibi, Dakshin Roy, etc., because their way of worship is very simple. It is believed that these deities remain satisfied with most ordinary offerings. As a matter of fact the Muslim rulers and Gazis allowed those poor low caste rural people to worship the village folk-deities and make reconciliation with them and assimilated within themselves almost all the virtues of the deities concerned. And since then both Dakshin Roy and Gazi Saheb began to live peacefully. It was ordered that everybody will have to salute the Pir Saheb. Even today, the command of Alhakrishna Paigambar is carried out by many of the people of south Bengal in their simple faith. From the historical point of view, it also appears when two cultural traits come in conflict they have to conclude a truce. This happened among the Hindus, Muslim and Christian converts in West Bengal.

There is an influence of Islam in the worship of Dharma Thakur in West Bengal. The worship of Satyapir and Satyanarayan seems, in course of times to have taken place of the worship of Dharam Thakur.

VII

Just from the inception to the end of the medieval age, i.e. for a good few hundred years, from the 13th century, inspite of living together side by side, the orthodox minded people of both the communities, the Hindus and the Muslims, are still separate as before, in all aspects of socio-religious status. This

is due to the fact that their religious faith and social set-up are diagonally oppcsite to those of each other. The part and parcel of Hindu religion is to offer worship to the idol or image of god or goddess with various commodities, after installing the same in a temple, whereas the Mus'ims are non-idoratrous. It is not only profane according to the Muslim Scriptures to offer worship to any idol of god cr goddess, but destruction of temple and images of Hindu gods and goddesses is deemed as an act of virtue by the fanatic Muslims. Again according to some Hindu Scriptures, the Muslims are called "Mlechha" and thought to be unclean. Not to speak of social relation as inter-marriage, inter-dining, etc. together with the Muslims even the touch of a Muslim was once deemed as impure. A Hindu would be outcast, if he had dined with a Muslim. The customs like taking beef, and widow-marriage were once highly offensive according to Hindu religion, whereas these customs were popularly followed by the Muslims. Likewise, socio-religious rituals in respect of food, drink, dress and livelihood of the Hindus, are quite separate from those of the Muslims. The Hindus have got their literary incentive from Sanskrit, wheres the Muslims, in this respect, have been inspired by Arabic and Persian languages.

Rituals relating to marriage, birth, death and heirship also differ between the two communities. Al-Beruni (1030 B. S.), a renowned Muslim learned man commented—"What the Hindus believe in, we do not believe - what we believe, the Hindus do not".

The universal basic principles of the Muslim religion are strictly guided by the principles laid down in the Muslim Scriptures like the Quran and the Hadish. So, throughout the Quranic world, there is a basic unity in relation to religious faith and other socio-cultural rituals, which are no exception in Bengal too.

Many Hindus belonging to the lower castes, accepted Islam

and helped the Muslims increase their number through conversion. They had formerly to undergo various disadvantages and insultations in the Hindu society But as soon as they had accepted Islam, they were freed from these social disadvantages faced by them in the Hindu society, and had acquired the right even to be placed sometimes in the highest strata in the Muslim society and State. A follower of Baktyar Khalji, who had belonged to the shepherd-class, later on became the ruler of Gour.

Inspired by this example and others, the low caste Hindus accepted Islam in a large number, at that time, which is not a matter of astonishment at all. On the other hand, then Hindus had to undergo oppression in various ways. They had to pay a tax known as "Jizya" and had a little scope for employment to any high post in the administration. They were practically deprived of many kinds of political and socio-religious facilities. All these factors together tempted the Hindus to accept Islam as on embracing Islam they could be exempted from paying Jizya and be able to enjoy many such facilities.

At the beginning of the 16th century, D Barbossa, a Portuguese traveller wrote about Bengal that the Hindus accepted Islam every day with a view to enjoying royal favour. On the other hand, the Hindus were made outcast, if knowingly or unknowingly, they took any drink or food touched by any Muslim, or had smelt any proscribed food, or licked the same. If a Muslim had touched the body of a Hindu lady, she herself, and sometimes the whole family, along with other kith and kins had to lose their caste. All such outcastes had no other alternative than to accept Islam. Sometimes, the Hindus were forcibly converted and sometimes they professed Islam quite willingly, and sometimes they did it being influenced by a Kazi or a Darbesh reputed of having the power of miracle. All these factors led to the increase in the number of Muslims in Bengal.

It is doubtless, that most of the Bengalee Muslims are converts from lower caste Hindus. Of course, many Hindus, who belonged to the lower strata of the society, are known at first to have accepted Buddhism due to being degraded by the caste Hindus and thereafter during the Muslim rule in Bengal, accepted Islam, which they thought would end their caste degradation. The book entitled "Dharmapuja Bidhan" states that introduction of Dharmapuja in Bengal is the last relic of Buddhism. Dharmapuja is still in vogue among the low caste Hindus and many converted Muslims in Bengal. Sufficient Historical evidences regarding the acceptance of Budhism by the lower caste Hindus of Bengal are yet lacking.

VIII

In the 15th century, the communities of Pir and Faqir, popularly known also as Sufi and Darbesh, largely helped in conversion from Hindu to Muslim, and spread the religious ideas of Islam in Bengal. The Sufis were very active in conversion work, which they deemed to be a great deed of virtue, according to Islamic Scripture. Among the Sufis, many were learned men and lived the life of a monk. Being inspired by their advice and examples, many Hindus then embraced Islam. It was a fond belief that the Pirs, if they wished, could easily remove the distress and sufferings of people, restore life in a dead body, and cause the death of a man magically and tell the fortune of man. As a result, the disciples of some Tantrik monks being attracted by all these supernatural power of the Pirs, came to the Dargahs of the Pirs and embraced Islam. The Pirs practically acquired the place of the Tantrik monks during the Muslim rule in Bengal. They were expert both in scriptures and weapons, and helped the spread of Islam in Bengal through scriptures and weapons.

Those Hindus who accepted Islam, did not know the Arabic language. Of course, a limited few knew Persian language. Yet they had no basic knowledge regarding Muslim Scriptures. It has been revealed from the work of some Muslim writers, that this stage of the converted Muslims persisted till the 16th century. One of them has written that Bengalee Muslims neither understood Arabic, nor did they understand their own religion. They always remained dipped in superstitions and illusion. But four of the five religious principles of Islam, such as, Iman (belief in God or Allah and Paigambar, His Messenger like Hijrat), Namaz (prayer), Roza (fasting), and Haz or pilgrimage (to visit Mecca etc. on pilgrimage), were learnt to have been observed regularly by many Bengalee Muslims. But how far the fifth one, Jakath, i.e. regular offer of one fifth of one's income to the poor was obsrved, is not known.

Some rituals, as were not approved by the orthodox Muslim rules, were found to have been in vogue in the Muslim community of Bengal, this is because, many low-caste Hindus, inspite of embracing Islam could not altogether give up the rituals, which they observed in their pre-conversion days, in the line their Hindu forefathers had done. Naturally those rituals gradually made their way into the Muslim society, which is an important theme of this work.

Kabi Kankan has narrated that some Muslims in Bengal indulged in enjoing nutritious food and drink. They had three to four wives, who used ornaments and valuable dresses. They also indulged in song and dance, which were tabooed according to the Quran. Marriage settled at the tender age, was performed after attainment of maturity. The groom went to the bride's house riding a horse, in procession, where a Mollah solemnised the marrige rituals before Kazi. In the house of many rich Muslims, songs, dances and merry-making continued for days together. Many rituals relating

to marriage, as were prevalent among the Hindus, were also found to survive among the Muslims.

The rich Muslims practised polygamy and divorce was a very easy system. The woman had many maid-servants. The system of use of Borkha or screen, was very hard and fast. Eunuch guards were appointed in the domain of the women of many Muslims rulers. The dances of female dancers and songs were highly appreciated somewhere in the then Muslim society.

When the low-caste Hindus began to embrace Islam in a very large number, the higher-caste Hindus, with a view to putting a check to this mass conversion from Hindus to Muslims, recognised the worship of gods and goddesses like, Oli-chandi, Sitala, Manasa, Dharma Thakur, etc. by the low-caste Hindus. Smarta Raghu Nandan also allowed the worship of the folk-gods and goddesses. Treatment of the tiger and crocodile etc. as gods and superstitious rituals related to their worship, were and are still, in vogue among the low-caste Hindus and many Muslims of South Bengal. The worship of water-goddess, Kumbhir Bahan, Kalu Roy and Forest goddess, Sardul Baban, Dakshin Roy etc. are still in practice among many low caste Hindus and Muslims. All these rituals are the culmination of cruel systems like the performance of Sati, sacrifice of ones child to the Ganges and the crude, and self-destroying agony of Charak, as were in vogue, in the later part of the medieval age. After conquering Hindu kingdom, some Muslim rulers converted the Hindu captives into Muslims and used them as slaves and the young women were made wives or Harems (prostitutes.)

Religion and image-worship were part and parcel of Hindu folk life in the medieval age. But from the beginning to the end, during the Muslim rule in Bengal, there was a common trend to destroy the Hindu temples and build mosques thereon. From Jafar Khan Gazi of the 13th century

to Murshid KuliKhan of the 18th century, many Muslim rulers of Bengal indulged in demolishing Hindu temples and erecting mosques thereupon, Some Muslim rulers not only destroyed the Hindu temples, they created a great hindrance and waged Jehad against observance of religious rituals by the Hindus. The increase in the number of Muslims in Bengal was due to the system of "Jat Mara" or caste pollution in which many Muslim rulers and the Kazis indulged freely. The Hindus laid most importance on image-worship in the field of religion, on the one hand and maintenance of sanctity of women on the other. The Muslims also invaded these domains of religious faith and social customs. Even in the 15th century, forcible pollution of the chastity of Hindu ladies was made by many Muslims on a large scale.

Though the Hindus could have been able to save if not altogether themselves to a great extent from the influence of Islamic culture, many Muslims could not have saved themselves from the influence of the Hindus, mainly because, most of the Bengalee Muslims were converts from the Hindus. That was why, they could not altogether give up the Hindu rituals, many of which had entered the Muslim society along with their conversion to Islam.

IX

According to Debajyoti Burman, "The large scale of proselytisation in Bengal depended generally on two factors—the fear and the favour. Such forcible conversion was attended by severe persecution and, at times, even by mass massacre and bloodshed, as could be found in some of the Bengali literary works of 16th to 18th centuries. The most organised persecution of Hindus was made by Jalal-ud-din, son of Raja Kans, who occupied the throne for 17 years. He offered the Hindus, two choices—

'Quran or death'. He made more converts to Islam during the 17 years of his crusade. It was more than the number of converts in the next three-hundred years of Muslim rule in India. He ascended the throne, according to Raidus Salatin, in 1414 A. D. It was ascribed to him that rather than submitting to Islam, many Hindus, at that time, fled to Kamrup and the jungles of Assam and Cachhar. The existence of a large number of Bengali-speaking people in Goalpara, Kamrup and Cachhar districts of Assam, that is in the border districts of this province contiguous to East Bengal, stands as a concrete evidence of the large-scale migrations that had taken place at that time, to avoid forcible conversion. Although these people have settled in Assam, but they have maintained their Bengali culture.

The drive for forcible conversion was generally taken by Sultans themselves and when it was not a direct State enterprise, it had the full backing of the State.

In the Mandaran Police station of Arambagh Sub-division of Hooghly District, where the Muslim population preponderates over the Hindus, there is a tradition that Muhammad Ismail Shah Ghazi defeated the local Raja and forcibly converted the people to Islam. This tradition is not confirmed by history. But history tells us very little of what had happened in Bengal during the reign of the independent Muslim Kings, the names of some of whom have been known only from the inscriptions on their coins.

Existence of ruthless fanatics like Jalal-ud-din, who forcibly circumcised many of his Hindu subjects and perpetrated acts of grossest oppression and the fact that Muslim mosques were often constructed with stones taken from Hindu temples, indicate the nature of persecution to which Hindus were subjected at the hands of their Muslim conquerors, even upto the end of the 18th century. Graphic records of mass attacks on Hindu places of worship, led by offices of the State, are found in Chaitanya Charitamrita, Bansidas's

'Manasamangal', Bijoy Gupta's 'Manasamangal', Shamser Ghazir Gan, the 'Dharmamangal poems' and many other works of Bengali literature covering a few centuries.

Stories of forcible conversion, such as the following, are however, narrated by the Muhammadans themselves without any feeling of shame or astonishment. While the Muhammadan population was still scattered, it was customary for each householder to hang up an earthen water-pot from his thatched roof, as a sign of his religious pursuation. One day a Maulavi, after some years' absence, went to visit a disciple who lived in the centre of a Hindu village, but could not find him. On enquiry he was told that the Mussalman villagers had renounced his faith and joined an outcaste tribe. On his return to the city, the circumstances were reported by him to the Nowab. A detachment of troops was sent to the village; it was surrounded; and every person in it, was compelled to become Muhammadan.

Westland gives the account of Pir Ali, the Dewan of Khan Jahan Ali, who ruled in South Jessore in the 15th century. It reads—'Pir Ali, whose proper name was Muhammad Tahir, was a Brahmin apostate and like other renegades like Jalal-ud-din, Murshid Quli Khan and Kalapahar, proved a worse persecutor of the people of his original faith than others who were Muslims by birth. Pir Ali obtained Hindu adhesion to the tenets of the Koran by forcing them to smell or taste beef cooked by a Muslim. These converts are known as Piralis and they still retain many of the Hindu beliefs and customs. Some have succeeded to a certain extent, in recovering their original caste and have remained Hindus. The family of Asad Ali Khan of Chittagong is by origin, a branch of the Srijukta Family of Noapara, a village of Chittagong. Their ancestor, Syam Rai Choudhury was deprived of his caste by being forced to smell beef and was compelled to become a Muslim. The Rajas of Kharagpur became Muslims, because after being defeated by one of Akbar's Generals, the accep-

tance of Islam was made a condition of being allowed to retain the family estates'.

Conversion under legal pressure: The Kazis played a prominent part in the conversion movement. The Kazi held a very important position in a Muslim State. He was not only a law-giver, but also a maker of criminal laws. In respect of civil laws, the Hindus even during Muslim rule, continued to be governed by their own codes; but the criminal laws were exclusively the orders of the King or dispensations of the Kazis.

Nawab Murshid Quli Khan used to dispense justice according to the injunctions of the Quran, and on interpretation of the laws by Kazi Muhammad Sharf, who had been appointed to the Office of Kazi byEmperor Aurangzeb. He had the reputation as an upright judge; a great scholar and free from hypocrisy. It is related that a mendicant at Chunakhali begged for alms from Brindaban, a Taluqdar. The latter got annoyed at this and turned him out of his house. The mendicant on his (Brindaban's) route of passage collected some bricks, laid them one over the other like the foundation of a wall and named it a mosque and shouted out the call of prayer, whenever the palanquin of Brindaban passed that way. Brindaban became annoyed by this and threw out some bricks from the foundation. He abused the mendicant and drove him out from that place. Thus insulted the mendicant lodged a complaint at the court of justice of Nawab Jafar Khan (Murshid Quli Khan). Kazi Muhammad Sharf, with the concurrence of the other Ulema, acting on the injunction of sacred laws, ordered the execution of Brindaban. Jafar Khan, not acquiescing in the sentence of execution, enquired of the Kazi as to whether he could be left off. He asked the Kazi—'Can in any way this Hindu be saved from the death sentence?' The Kazi replied; "Only so much interval may be allowed in the execution of his death sentence, as may be taken up in the execution of his intercedar; after that he

must be executed'. Prince Azim-us-Shan also interceded for Brindaban, but that too was of no avail. The Kazi killed him by shooting him with an arrow. Azim-us-Shan wrote to Emperor Aurangzeb as follows: 'Kazi Muhammad Sharf has turned mad; for nothing he had killed Brindaban with his own hand'. The Emperor remarked on the report of the Prince thus: 'This is a gross calumny; the Kazi is on the side of God'. Till the close of the reign of Emperor Aurangzeb, Kazi Sharf continued to hold the Office of Kazi.

The judiciary was also utilised for the facilitation of conversion. Criminals could escape punishment even for murder or adultery, if they embraced Islam. This step was considered as full atonement for either of these crimes and has been mentioned by Bernier.

In later times, this compulsory system was still further extended. The tyrannical Murshid Quli Khan enforced a law that any Amla or Zamindar failing to pay the revenue that was due or being unable to make good the loss, should, with his wife and children be compelled to accept Islam. It was the common law that any Hindu forfeiting his caste by a breach of regulations could only be reinstated by the Muslim Government and if it refused to interfere, the delinquent remained an outcaste ultimately taking shelter in the ranks of the faithful.

On the south-eastern frontier of Bengal, a hardy and enterprising class of Muhammadads have settled from the earliest historical times, and long before the first European landed at Chittagong, Arab merchants carried on an extensive and lucrative trade with its inhabitants, and disseminated their religious ideas among the people. How and when the dwellers of the coast became Mussalmans is unknown, but when Barbosa visited Bengal at the beginning of the 16th Century, he found the inhabitants of the interior, gentiles, subject to the King of Bangal, who was a 'Hoor'. while the sea ports were inhabited by 'Moors' and 'Gentiles'. He also met many Indians and foreigners like Arabs, Persians and Abyssinians.

Whenever Muhammadan rule existed, slavery was developed and during the centuries of misrule and oppression through which Bengal passed, the Hindus were compelled to submit to either conversion or slavery, as a refuge to get rid of their troubles. The successive incursions, famines, pestilences and civil wars impoverished and hardened the people and drove them in sheer desparation to sell their children as Mussalman slaves. They were allowed to marry and their families supported by the master, added to the number of Islam.

Economic conditions influencing conversion : The peculiarities of economic conditions of East, North and West Bengal account for the large difference in widely varying proportions of Muslims in these three areas. While in the former two, they are the largest being as high as 85 percent with a minimum of 60, in West Bengal, the proportion is the lowest the maximum being 55 percent, with a minimum of 4 percent. West Bengal was economically most prosperous. Murshidabad being the seat of Government in West Bengal, there had been a large percentage of Muslims in that district. People in North Bengal were exceedingly poor. Many of them could not even afford to wear cotton-garments. In East Bengal, almost everyone had his own land to grow his own food, his own tank for water and fish, and his own house to live in. A small amount of money was earned by disposing of the surplus grains to the non-food producing classes like, the artisans, barbers, potters, etc. which was sufficient for them for the purchase of cotton-cloth, salt or mustard oil. Barter was largely followed.

But the poorer sections of the people were the worst sufferers. Acceptance of Islam was irresistible for many under such conditions, as it meant their recognition as a separate and favoured class, which put an end to many of the discriminations that led them to enormous suffering. But there were few converts from higher caste Hindus. They were

better able to resist the organised onslaughts and fought the menace,and when defeated fled from the country.'

X

The European traders came to India at first at the end of the 15th century and gradually impressed the then Moghul Emperors, by visiting the Royal Court and paying rich tributes on behalf of their government, for securing certain concessions for carrying on business. The emperors being pleased granted them Sanad 'firman' by which they were in a position to carry on their trade freely and thus came in contact with a good number of people of various walks of life and castes of this subcontinent. A few of them also served in the Imperial Army. There were many historical factors contributing to the development of their business interest and consolidation. It is known to all that the European traders became the ruler of this country in course of time. This gave them opportunity to attract a good many people to the fold of Christianity. Besides, the very conservative doctrines of the Hindus generated disgust among the lower-castes and a good number of such people sought relief by adopting Christianity.

The Europeans converted many tribal people of India along with the lower-caste people. They explained to the tribal people that the Aryans were foreigners and they were original people of the soil, but those Aryans had driven out the natives to the hills and jungles and were living in the best places of India by usurping them. At this, many tribal people like, Oraon, Santal, Munda, Mahali, Kora, etc. embraced Christianity.

Christianity appeared in India a few centuries earlier than Islam. The first church was established in Kattang Goltur in Kerala with the patronage of Hindu Kings, in the First Christian Era. In Kerala, the Christians live side by side

with the Hindus and the Muslims in harmony. The historical date of the advent of Christianity in Kerala is 52 or 55 (in other source) A. D. That year St. Thomas arrived somewhere near the Fort of Mujibis, when many people were charmed by his superhuman influence and ultimately embraced Christianity. The Kings of Kerala helped the Christians much in many ways. The increase in the percentage of literacy among the Keralians is due to the spread of Christianity there.

After the arrival of Vascodegama in India in 1498 A.D. the preachers of Christianity found it favourable to preach Christianity in India. In 1500 A.D. the Portuguese merchants established a hut in Calicut. With the desire to establish a kingdom in India, the Portuguese Governor Albukerk captured the island of Goa, the famous seaport of the Sultan of Vijapur. Albukerk, in order to keep the Portuguese colony in India well-gauarded, began to encourage the Portuguese to marry Indian women whose children naturally became their faithful subjects. V. Smith said, "He married them off by hudreds to Mohammedan and Hindu women, who had circumstantially to embrace Christianity." Thus he created a big Portuguese race in India, who were darker than the Indians in skin pigment.

The Portuguese merchants on the strength of a Firman offered by the Mughal Emperor established a hut near Satgaon in Bengal in 1579 A. D. Afterwards it was converted into the town of Hooghly. They started slave trade in Hooghly. They collected a large number of Hindu and Muslim orphans in many ways and converted them into Christianity and then put them on sale at various places. This corrupt practice was brought to the notice of Emperor Jahangir. He appointed Kashim Khan as the Subadar of Bengal and ordered him to uproot the Portuguese. He seized Hooghly in 1632 A. D. Irrespective of children or old people, the Portuguese, after defeat, were put to death

en masse either on the face of cannon, or by drowning, or by burning. The rest were taken as captive to Delhi.

For about 125 years after this massacre in Hooghly upto the Battle of Plassey in 1757 A.D., the Christian preachers became so afraid that they did not dare preach Christianity. However, they won over the depressed people by saying, "Your preceptors are very selfish. They make distinction between man and man." On hearing this, a large number of people embraced Christianity to get rid of the then degrading social customs.

But after the Battle of Plassey, under the patronage of East India Company, the Padres (Clergy) regained anew life. Gradually the Mughal rule and Nawabi rule were over. Then they established their stronghold at Hooghly and Serampur to preach Christianity therefrom. They established press, introduced newspaper and started to spread education and inspired people to work for social reforms. For long thirty years, after the Battle of Plassey, the Christian preachers preached Christianity peacefully without any hindrance. Afterwards they adopted a somewhat harmful policy which was, at first, objected to by Raja Rammohan Roy. These Christians began to publish many booklets and distributed these among the masses free of cost, abusing radical Hindu Gods and Saints like Mahadev, Krishna, etc. They converted many low caste people to Christianity. Many low caste people of Bengal, specially of the districts of Nadia, Bankura, Midnapur and 24-Paganas etc. embraced Christianity, giving up the religion of their forefathers. These missionaries used to say that the scriptures of the Hindus like, the Vedas, the Puranas, etc. are all man-made to cheat the people. In this way, Christianity spread its roots in Bengal.

In Bengal, the Christians converred many low caste and a few higher caste people by holding out before them the bait of offering service, wealth and education abroad. A section of Bengalee Hindus were thus won over, who became so ultra-

modern by coming in contact with the Christians that the Brahmin youngmen refused to wear the sacred thread and many of them gave up evening prayer to God in the temple. They became so infatuated with new religion that if they were forcibly brought inside the temple, they would at once start reciting lines from Homer's Iliad, instead of chanting Mantras (incantations) or offering prayer. They would scoff at the Brahmin and say aloud to him tauntingly, "We eat beef". This was the behaviour pattern of those Bengali youngmen who became converted and received English education.

When such was the dark age in the Hindu society, Duff, a renowned preacher of Christianity earnestly took up preaching of Christianity. As a result of this preaching, some elite among the Bengalees like, Mahesh Chandra Ghosh, Reverend Krishna Mohan Bandopadhyaya, Madhusudan Dutta etc. embraced Christianity. The missionary activities became so menacing that the Hindu society was fast disintegrating. It is learnt from a recorded statement of Debendranath Tagore that once Brajendra Nath Sarkar came to him weeping and complained that his brother Umesh Chandra had taken both of their wives to Mr. Duff by force and they were baptised by him, inspite of his admonitions and appeals to him to refrain from doing so. He lodged a complaint with the Supreme Court, but that too had been turned down. Christianity became so aggressive at that time that even women of female apartments were not spared.

It was the time when De Rozio, William Carry, Duff and David Hare took initiative for spreading western education in Bengal. Maharshi Debendra Nath Tagore came into conflict with the Christian Padres, when DeRojio had influenced the mind of a large number of young Bengalees through education. Mr. Krishna Mohon Bandopadhyaya, Ram Gopal Ghosh and Madhusudan Dutta, the famous Bengali youngmen, being enlightened by western education, began to hate everything Indian and started drinking wine so much so, that even the

fathers of many youngmen used to offer wine to their sons. One of the then learned men commented—"If there is anything that we hate from the bottom of our heart, it is Hinduism," It was such a dismal period of the Bengali society.

The various converted Christian communities living in India have various regional dialects according to their habitats. They also differ among themselves in social customs, economic professions and mental outlook, which depend upon the socio-economic and cultural differentiations prevailing in various parts of India ; as Indian culture is not uniform everywhere and varies from South to North, and from Western to Eastern part of India. The lower caste Hindu communities embraced Christianity primarily to escape the oppression of the curse of casteism, and in some cases, in the hope of enjoying some economic benefit from the missionaries, whereas the cases of conversion from the upper class Hindus are due to some other reasons as, to regularise an illegal marriage, or to be well-established in life, etc. The converted Christians have in most cases retained the manners, customs, rites and rituals observed by their Hindu forefathers. They could not bid good-bye to the old socio-religious rites and rituals as were in vogue and at the same time, had no prejudice against the socio-religious practices of their adopted religious faith.

This special and peculiar bent of mind represents what India has contributed to Christianity. On the other hand, Christianity has added something to the cultural richness by imparting knowledge, specially in medical and engineering science in India. The Christian impact in India is a long and chequered one. It is a story of repeated attempts experimentations, error, stagnation, failure and success.

XI

From a rapid survey of the constituents of population of India or more specifically of Bengal it is evident that in pre-Aryan days the people were largely autochthonous with their variegated cultures. Those cultures were too deep-rooted and unbending to the later Aryan cultures which were of higher order. As a result, below the surface of Aryan pattern of society and culture, there flowed subterraneously the original cultures of the soil. These cultures were as vivacious as the grasses on soil, which dry up only to reappear again.

In Bengal the recrudescence of the non-Aryan and pre-Aryan cultures were possible whenever and wherever there was slackening of hold of Aryan culture. This was favoured by the geo-physical conditions. The land full of criss-cross rivers, floods and tornadoes, made the onward march of Aryanisation extremely difficult. As a result, the children of the soil followed their own ways of life and social system and they exhibited the native genius of re-orienting any extraneous idea in their own way of thinking. Thus there had been an appreciable overtone of local metamorphosisation of Aryan religious sanctions like Tantrikisation of Vedic rituals or rather Hinduisation of Aryan rituals. Similarly, when a large number of Hindus were converted to Islam, these people modified the Islamic tenets and rituals by their older beliefs or rather there was Hinduisation of Muslim rituals. Alternatively, it can be said that the Hindu rituals survived in the midst of Islamic society. Equally significant was the local tendency of Krishnaisation of Christian beliefs. In other words, the Hindu rituals were allowad to persist in the thoughts and actions of these people, although they underwent conversion to Christianity.

Such was the phenomenon that is easily discernible to any researcher who peeps patiently into the pages of history and studies society in Bengal at close quarters.

CASTE SYSTEM AMONG THE HINDUS, MUSLIMS AND CHRISTIANS

Caste constitutes the basic element of the Hindu social structure and relates to the activities, relations and incentives of the people. India is widely known as the classic land of castes and the word "caste" is universally associated with India and her indigenous people. Even the people other than the Hindus, in India, could not escape the infection of casteism. For example the Muslims and Christians here in India are divived into caste-like groups.

Caste defined by Sir H. Riweley is "a collection of families or groups of families, bearing a common name which usually denotes or is associated with a mythical ancestor, human or divine : professing to follow the same calling*: and regarded by those who are competent to give an opinion as forming a single homogeneous community". According to Dr. V. A. Smith a caste may be defined as, "a group of families internally united by peculiar rules for the observance of ceremonial purity especially in the matter of diet and marriage". Shama Sastri defines that caste means a social exclusiveness with reference to diet and marriage, birth and rituals are secondary.

Accarding to Prof. Rapson, the origin of the caste system is due to the distinction between the Aryans of white complexion and the non-Aryans of black complexion. Originally the people were divided into two groups, the Aryans and non-Aryans who later on, were condemned to the Sudra class.

Dr. V. A. Smith opines that caste system has arisen out of the persistent mis-translation of Manu's term 'Varna' as caste. This term should be rendered class or order or by some other equivalent term. According to Sham Sastri the words Brahmanas, Khatriyas, Vaisyas and Sudras were names of classes rather than of castes during the pre-historic period.

H. G. Rawlinson defines that caste is a Portuguese word

which means purity of race. The original idea about caste was that of varna (colour). The dark-skinned Dasyus were known as non-Aryans.

According to Dr. Gokhale the Indian terms which are in use to describe the caste-system are Varna and Jati ; complexion and birth. The former refers to racial difference and the latter to birth and descent. It was only to mark the difference between the Aryans and non-Aryans that the terms Arya-Varna and Das-Varna came into use and they are used as such in the Rigveda. The Aryans of white complexion were the conquerers and the non-Aryans of black complexion were the conquered. Nesfield opines that caste system was nothing but professional specialisation. According to H. Risby caste was a matter of race.

In modern age there is a clear distinction between caste and class. Caste obeys the traditional manners and customs of a particular group of people in respect of social status, while class means only professional grouping of people sush as teachers, industrial works and caltivators etc. They are treated as different classes whereas, the carpenters, blacksmiths, and potter-markers are divided as caste like groups to follow the traditional customs regarding birth, marriage and death etc. After all class serves political ambitions while caste obeys strict scruples and trabitional customs which usually have no connection with class interests.

The Brahmanas attribute a devine origin to cast system. According to the tenth Mandal of the Riveda called Purusha Sukta which asserts that the Brahmana was born out of the mouth of Brahma, the Kshatriya from his arms, the Vaishya from his stomach and the Sudra from his feet. As the vedas are deemed to be revealed books and the contains there of, are nothing but truth, so the divisions of the society as mentioned there, in are attributed to divine ordinance.

It is not that the caste system is met with only in India. it is also prevalent in some other countries in different forms.

The Nordic races had a sort of caste-system amongst themselves. There existed freeman and slaves amongst the Greeks and Romans also. The early Iranians had also such social distinction amongst themselves. The Anglo-saxons who dominated the whole of Europe had some social groups like Earls, Ceorls and Theowas formed on the basis of their births. Even in modern age in England and elsewhere Counts, Dukes and Archdukes are treated to be of different social orders or groups. All these phenomena practically put us to thinking that in ancient time also there was something in the social structure which allowed the division of society into class like groups. At a later stage when the Aryans invaded India and settled in the Indo-Gangetic plains, their fair complexion and different occupation pratically made a clear distinction between them and the conquered i.e. the non-Aryans of black complexion. This difference practically contributed to the development of a system which ultimately was so known as caste system. In other countries with modern outlook, the old distinction between man and man disappeared gradually but in India certain peculiar circumstances forced the society to continue with that unnatural old distinction.

In ancient time caste system in India was flexible. At that time one could easily change one's caste to another. There were then, four social divisions namely (a) Brahmin, (b) Kshatriya (c) Vaishya and (d) Sudra with different nature of duties, The Brahmins as a class were considered to be the highest order in the society. Their duties, according to Dharma-Sastra, were to read and teach the vedic literature and to perform various sacrifies and rites. The Brahmins were to live on the charity of the people or on the fees obtained by performing religious rites and sacrifices etc. This was the intellectual aristocracy which the best brains of the day were drawn from. They were expected to live an ideal life and to maintain a very high standard of morality so that

they might be an ideal to the rest of society. Tne Brahmins were also meant not to covet wealth, power or any worldly gain.

The second social order was the Kshatriyas who were primarily entrusted with the works of administration and defence of the country. The door of learning was also open to them. The Vaishyas were the third social order. They were concerned with the economy of the country and were to look after the production of wealth. The Vaishyas not only carried on commerce and trade but also tilled the land and reared the cattle as well.

The Sudras were the last social order created by the Indo-Aryans. They were denied the studies of Vedic literatures and were not allowed to wear the sacred thread. The people of the three upper castes did not mix with them and they were to them, as untonchables. They were the most under-developed and were deprived of various social benefits. But it was a very peculiar thing to note here that a Brahmin could have select spouse from any of the castes lower to him i.e. the Kshatriyas, Vaishyas and even the Sudras. The Kshatriyas from the Vaishyas and the Sudras, and the Vaishyas from the Sudras whereas the Sudras could not exercise any such right to select their spouses from any caste superior to them. As a result, though inter-caste marriage from ancient time even upto the early 20th century was unthinkable, the Brahmins could marry any beautiful girl after his choice from any caste inferior to him. If a Sudra did commit any social crime he could easily get rid of the sin committed by making some offer to the Brahmins or by giving a grand feast to them ; after a feast to the Brahmins the people belonging to the other castes had to make Bhojan dakshina (offer of price etc.) which was not applicable in case of the other castes. After all it appears from the then social systems that the rules were made always in favour of the upper caste people specially the Brahmins. But if a Brahmin commits any

social crime he only had to make some oblation and not to undergo any such obligation.

The caste system in ancient time was flexible. At that time one could easily change one's caste from one to another. Parshuram was a Brahmin by birth but a Kshatriya by profession. Likewise Visvamitra, a Kshatriya by birth became a Brahmarshi after a long meditation. Dronacharya, a teacher by profession became one of the best soldiers of his time. Inspite of being a Kshatriya the king Janaka alike became one of the proudest scholars of the Vadas in his times The famous Rishi Vasishta was the son of a prostitute while Vyas, the son of a fisher-woman is stated to be the author of the original Mahabharat, Rishi Parashar, the famous law-giver, was the son of a Chandala holding the lowest position even among the Sudras.

As time went on this old flexibility in caste system became very rigid. As a result, crossing over from one caste to another through change of profession became impossible as castes began to be regarded as social position of a man, obtained by birth and not by the work one did. The four main castes, in course of time, began to be divided again into many sub-castes under various circumstances. Some new castes were formed by absorption of the non-Aryans into the fold of the Aryans. Thus caste system became the index of social status of a man in the mixed society of the Aryans and non-Aryans and various caste taboos crept in during the later Vedic society, resulting in the formation of the new idea like untouchability in those days. As per Gautama Sutra, a Brahmin was not allowed to eat food except from the re-born. No one was to initiate low-caste people nor to teach them, nor to perform any religious sacrifice for them, nor have social intercourse with them. Thus, a rigid type of social exclusiveness developed in the Hindu society so far as the Sudras or the low caste people were concerned. But there was no such rigidity and exclusiveness or untouchability among the other three upper castes.

At a later stage the Buddhists and the Jains who did not take animal diet at all formed a separate group within their castes.

When the Greeks invaded India the Hindus did not, mix with them and called them 'Yavanas'. But at a later stage when the Indo-Bactrians and Indo-Parthians settled on the Indian soil, they gradually were absorped into the Hindu fold resulting in the formation of some sub-castes with their strange mode of life with different beliefs and practices. The Huns alike got absorbed in the Hindu society and gave birth to many new sub-castes. Besides, inter-marriage amongst various castes also gave rise to many new castes and sub-castes.

When the Muslims at a later stage, invaded India and converted many Hindus into Muslims either by force on at the point of sword, even then the rigidity of caste systems persisted as usual with least deviation from the original form. The Hindus were politically weak but religiously very strong Had they been so strong in their political affairs it might not have been possible for some Muslim rulers to establish kingdom here in India. However, the Hindus did not even then allow any individual in their caste to betray his faith or defy the then prevailing caste rules and if any one would have under any circumstances, defied caste rules, he would have been made out-caste. Besides, the upper caste people looked down upon the low caste people. if they had any dealings with the Muslims whom they called 'Mlechhas' Due to rigidity in caste system and being deprived of many social benefits and social status as were being enjoyed by the upper caste people, many lower castes quite willingly began to profess Islam. At that stage inorder to save the Hindu society and to put a check to the spread of Islam some sects like sikhs, Dadupanths, Vaisnavas and Satnamis etc. developed. They did not know any out-caste and do not believe in the disfuiction between man and man. They made not only the

Hindus but also many Muslims their disciples. Thus many sub-castes or social groups were given rise to in course of time.

The caste-ridden Hindu society has a peculiar feature denying equality of social status to all sections of the society. The basic structure of such a society is the hierachical arrangement in which clusters of castes occupy different levels and each such level is either higher or lower than the other by degree of ascendancy or descendancy in the hierarchical ladder.

This fundamental feature, as it appears since introduction of Chatur Varna (four classes) in the Aryan society, later on transformed into Hinduism, introduced into Hindu social organisation "Jati" (castes). The social position in regard to the activities, rights and obligations of a person due to his being a social element, is decided by his caste. Caste is, as it were, an index of status.

The word 'Caste' was first used in 1563 by Garcia de Orta. The word caste might have been derived from the Portuguese word 'Casta', which signified breed, kind or race. It also referred to the disinct races or castes (among the Hindus) of greater or lesser social dignity, treating the Muslims and Christians as untouchable, or as of lower degree. According to the rigid caste rules, none of a higher caste can eat or drink even with those belonging to the next lower strata.

The loss of cast-status creates a serious situation for the individual and for the community as a whole, in the caste-ridden Hindu society. And since the entire system is linked up with the notions regarding ritual, purity and pollution, a person during his life time, makes the greatest effort to see that he does not become so polluted as to be an outcaste.

Indian caste system has got a historical background of more than a millennium. During this period, a number of

political changes have taken place. More than one-tenth of the country's population have been converted into Islam and, at least, another one-twentieth into Christianity. Both these religions are unitarily monotheistic and zealously egalitarian and both were backed by the Governments of the day in the country, viz. the Muslim and British, respectively. The synthesis of Hindu-Muslim and Hindu-Christian religious thoughts has resulted in the growth of a number of reformative sectarian movements. Some of these were initiated and led by medieval saints like, Kabir, Dadu, Nanak Ruidas, Ramananda and Chaitanya. These are known as 'Bhakti Movements' (devotional cults) and the fundamental idea behind them is the social and religious equality of all men, the anti-thesis af Caste System. During the 18th and 19th Centuries, there were such movements as the Brahmo Samaj led by Raja Ram Muhan Roy, and the Arya Samaj led by Swami Dayananda. The former is said to be a Hindu version of Christianity; the latter is a Vedic Revivalist Movement.

In ancient times, the whole Hindu society was divided into four Varnas as Bramin (priest), Kshatriya (warrior), Vaisya (businessman) and Sudra. The last one is ordained to serve the people of the other three divisions. The Indians were, however, basically divided into two groups as Arya or fair-skinned, educated and civilised people, and Anarya or black-skinned, so-called uncivilised people, who were later on, overpowered by the Aryans and were gradually absorbed into their society. So, in the real sense, what we call caste system, is nothing but a system based on complexion as is obtained in the Western Countries, where there are people of two kinds, such as (i) people of fair complexion and (2) people of black complexion. Besides, there is no casteism but classism, such as workers, doctors, lawyers, clerks, engineers, and above all, the haves and the have-

nots ; as also in some countries professing the Christian faith, where a man engaged in a nature of dignified work, feels it beyond his dignity to take meal in the house of a man engaged in a work of comparatively lower status. There a barrister does not generally dine with a petty lawyer and is reluctant to establish any matrimonial relationship with him.

II

Details of caste systems among the Hindus have been shown in (1) Brihaddharma (2) current version of the Brahma Vaivartta Purana and (3) Jatimala which is a part of the Parusaram Samhita. These authorities do not agree with each other in regard to creation of castes as well as their social and functionary aspects. In the Brihaddharma Purana, it has been mentioned that there are thirty-six castes in all, but the list appended to it, specifies forty-one castes. According to Brihaddharma Purana excepting the Brahmins, all others are mixed castes and they are all grouped as 'Sudra'. These mixed castes have been classified into three categories as specified below :

(A) Uttama Sankar (Higher mixed-caste).

(B) Madhyama Sankara (Middle mixed-caste).

(C) Adhama or Antaja Sankara (Lower mixed-caste).

Besides these three mixed classes, there are other three classes as follows :

(i) Mlechha. (ii) Sat-Sudra. (iii) Asat-Sudra

A) Uttam Sankar has the following divisions :

(1) Karana—writer and scribe. They are regarded as Sat-Sudra i.e. clean Sudra. (2) Ambastha—Those who adopt the profession of medicine, are classified as Ambastha. They are also called Vaisya, as they prepare medicine and conduct certain religious functions.* (3) Ugra—They are

*It is noticeable that Brihaddharmapurana has treated the Baidya and Ambastha as separate sub-castes (Upabarna) having separate history relating to how they came into being.

warriors by profession and regarded as occupational Kshatriyas. (4) Magadha—They are regarded as bards or courtiers, as they were unwilling to get themselves engaged in cruel martial activities. (5) Tantubaya—Tanti (weaver). (6) Gandha Banik—spice-dealer. They deal in spices, perfume and other things of this type. (7) Napit—barber. (8) Gopa—who mainly deal in milk of cows and buffaloes. (9) Karmakar—Kamar (blacksmith). (10) Toulik—who weigh (Kayal) (11) Kumbhakar—Kumar (pottery maker). (12) Kangsakara—Kansari (maker of brass-metal untensils) (13) Sankhabanik or Sankhakara (Sankhari)—a worker or dealer in articles of conchshells. (14) Dasa—cultivator. (15) Barujibi or Barui—cultivator of betel-leaf. (16) Modaka or Moira—confectioner (17) Malakar—florist (garland maker). (18) Suta—profession was not found mentioned, but it is found that they are 'Charan or Gayak' (minstrel)—degraded Brahmin. (19) Rajputra—profession was not found mentioned. (20) Tambuli, Tamli—betel-leaf dealer.

B, Madhyam Sankara has the following divisions :

(21) Takshana—sculptor. (22) Rajak—washerman. (23) Swarnakar—goldsmith. (24) Subarnabanik—gold-dealer (25) Abhir or Ahir—milkman, cattle keeper. (26) Tailakar or Teli—oilman. (27) Dhibar—fisherman. (28) Soundik—Sunri. (29) Nata—dancer and musician. (30) Shavak, Sharak, Shavar. (31) Shekhar. (32) Jalik or Jalia or Jele—fisherman.

C. Adham Sankara or Antaja has the following divisions :

(33) Malegrahi or Malegrihi. (34) Kurava. (35) Chandala or Chanral—"Scheduled Caste" or depressed class of people. (36) Baur—Bauri. (37) Taksha—Takshankar—carpenter. (38) Charmakar or Chamar—leather maker. (39) Ghattajivi or Ghantajibi—protector of ferry-ghat, ferryman. (40) Dolabahi—Dulu Behara, i.e. Dulia or Duley of present day. (41) Malla (Malo of present day).

Class C. has no place in the Brahmanical caste system. They are considered as untouchable Mlechha.

Excluding these 41 castes there are several indigenous and foreign groups of people, such as, Pukkas, Pulinda, Khasa, Khara, Kombaja, Yavana, Suhma, Savara etc. All these mixed castes and sub-castes, according to Brahmavaivarta Puraya are classified into (a) 'Sat-Sudra' and (b) 'Asat-Sudra'. The castes such as, Jalia, Rajbanshi, etc. and Yavana (Muslims) are shown in the classification of Madhyam Sankara and Mlechha.

According to Brahmabaibarta Purana these people were classified as follows :

Sat-Sudra :—

(1) Karan. (2) Ambastha (Brahmin father and Vaisya mother). (3) Baidya (Born of a Brahmin mother owing to her intercourse with Aswini Kumar, their profession is to practise as physician). (4) Gopa. (5) Napit. (6) Villa (They are aboriginal Kome. It is difficult to explain how they became Sat-Sudra). (7) Modak (Confectioner). (8) Kubar. (9) Tambuli (Tamli). (10) Swarnakar—Gold dealer (They later on, were reduced to Asat-Sudra being cursed by the Brahmins, as they were reported to have had stolen gold.) (11) Malakar. (12) Karmakar, (13) Shankhakar. (14) Kubindak. (15) Kumbhakar. (16) Kansakar. (17) Sutradhar. (18) Chitrakar. (19) Swarnakar-Jeweller.

Swarnakar, Sutradhar and Chitrakar were reduced to the status of 'Asat-Sudra" due to their negligence in duties.

Asat-Sudra :—

In addition to (a) Swarnakar (Subarna-banik) (b) Sutradhar and (c) Chitrakar, there are the followings who are known as Asat-Sudra.

(1) Attalikakar (Building-maker or mason). (2) Kotak (Those who build house). (3) Tiber. (4) Tailakar. (5) Let. (6) Malla. (7) Charmaker. (8) Sunri. (9) Poundrak (Pod). (10) Mansachhed (Kasai). (11) Rajputra (Known as 'Rout' in the later stage). (12) Kaibarta—Kalijuger (presentday's) Dhibar. (13) Rajak. (14) Kouyali. (15) Gangaputra (Issue

born out of mixing of Let and Tiber). (16) Jungi (Jugi). (17) Agri (Ugra according to Brihaddharma Purana and Aguri of present day).

Those who are treated lower than the 'Asat Sudra' are called untouchables and classified as follows :—

(1) Byadh. (2) Bhar. (3) Kapali. (4) Kol (Adibasi Kome). (5) Konch (Coch—Aboriginal Kome). (6) Haddi (Hadi-sweeper). (7) Dom. (8) Jola. (9) Bagtita (Bagdi). (10) Sharak (The rest of the ancient Sravak). (11) Byalgrahi (Malegrahi, according to Brihaddharma Purana). (12) Chandala and others.

The nine Bengali Hindu castes namely, Satgop, Moyra, Tanti, Teli, Mali. Kamar, Kumar, Barui, and Napit are also known as Naba Shayak or Nabashak.

In 1885, Nesfield, on the basis of occupation, categorised the castes. Later on in 1901, Risley in his "Castes and Tribes of Bengal," prepared a classification according to the social status enjoyed by the different groups of people of Bengal.

Of the four Varnas, the main castes, viz., Brahmin. Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra, the Kshatriyas were not found in Bengal.

The Karanas or Kayasthas who think themselves as scribe, claim the status of Kshatriya. They, in stead of depending on 'Asi' (swords) depend on 'Masi' (ink and pen). Though the Vaishyas are traders by profession, yet most of the Sudras are classified in an alignment having, more or less, the same status as of Vaishya. Besides, a good number of indigenous tribal or aboriginal people of India, due to their constant participation in the Hindu mode of life, have been brought into the fold of all India caste structure.

III

Many peculiar customs and social systems, as in case of the Hindus are found amongst the Muslims of Bengal too. In 1927, Md, Iaqub Ali, a Headmaster of Rajarampur High School, wrote a book on "Caste System of Muslims". It

has been said there—"Islam is a religion of communism and universal brotherhood and it does not lend support to caste system which makes distinction or erects barrier between man and man. This religion has, rather, been built upon the ruins of casteism. Casteism in none of the Islamic countries, is found among the Muslim inhabitants. But Indian Muslim society differs from the Islamic ideology and tenets which abhor casteism. Social disabilities like casteism, as in the case of the Hindus, have affected the Muslim society here. Of course, though the most hateful customs of untouchability could not make its way into the Indian Muslim society, yet like the Hindus' pride for Koulinya, i.e. high or low-born system along with social status on the basis of the nature of profession one pursues, has a remarkable place in the Muslim society here. The Muslim Tanties who have adopted the profession of weaving and the Muslim fishermen known as 'Nikari' who have taken to the profession of fishing, are quite unreasonably treated as degraded classes in the society. As a result, even in Muslim society which believes in equality of the human status, two classes as Asharf and Atraf have been created."

Mohammad Iaqub Ali states— "From the C.I.R. 1911 it appears that Census Authorities in Bengal have divided the Muslims into Shaikh, Sayed, Mughal and Pathan etc. into small and big— eighty divisions. Such caste system amongst the Muslims of this country seems to be an unprecedented event, and nowhere in the world such caste system amongst the Muslims is met with (P.I)"

The list of caste system as mentioned in the Appendix of the booklet is as follows :—

(1) Abdal, (2) Ajlaf, (3) Akhunji, (4) Bedia, (5) Behara, (6) Beldar, (7) Bhat, (8) Bhatiya, (9) Chatua, (10) Churihar, (11) Dafadar, (12) Dai, (13) Darji (14) Deoan, (15) Dhaoa, (16) Dhoba, (17) Dhuniyo or Dhunkar, (18) Fakir, (19) Gayin, (20) Hazzam, (21) Jolah, (22) Kasaji, (23) Kalan,

(24) Kan, (25) Kasbi, (26) Kasai, (27) Kazi (28) Khan, (29) Khondakar, (30) Kalu, (31) Kumar, (32) Kunjra, (33) Lalbegi, (34) Mohipherush, (35) Mahimal, (36) Mallah, (37) Mallick, (38) Masalchi, (39) Mehtar, (40) Meer, (41) Mirja, (42) Muchi, (43) Mogal, (44) Nagarchi, (45) Naniya or Nanua, (46) Nasya, (47) Nat, (48) Nikari (49) Pathan, (50) Paoabiya, (51) Pirkodali, (52) Rasua, (53) Sayed, (54) Shaikh, (55) Sonar, (56) and other small castes as, (a) Afgan, (b) Ashraf, (c) Bakli, (d) Bakho, (e) Badi, (f) Bhuinya, (g) Choudhury, (h) Chunari, (i) Dafali, (j) Gaddi, (k) Golam, (l) Halalkhor, (m) Hijra, (n) Hoseni, (o) Kharadi, (p) Qureshi, (q) Laheri, (r) Mangta, (s) Mehana, (t) Mirdeh, (u) Miriyasin, (v) Miya, (w) Neo-moslem, (x) Pateya, and (y) Sunni (P-59).

The author in his book made a comment in this respect that the ignorant, as well as, illiterate Muslims of this country, being divorced from the Islamic ideology, and due to their prolonged contact with the Hindu neighbours, have introduced casteism amongst themselves, which is incompatible with the tenets of Islam. On the other hand, the Muslims who are converts from the Hindus, have infused their long-inherited caste system in the Muslim society which believes in the equality of all human beings. So, at the root of these unknown divisions in the Muslim society, there lies the influnce of Hinduism.

The Hindu surname like Nikari is found prevalent amongst the Bengali Muslims who have taken to the profession of selling of fish. Likewise, the use of surnames like Biswas, Mondal, Paramanik, Naskar, Halder, Choudhuri, Gharami, etc. are also in vogue amongst the Bengali Muslims, who are not fully aware of the Islamic tenets. The profession-indicating surnames like, Jola (weaver), Kalu (oilman), Chasha (cultivator) etc. earmarked for the low-caste Hindus, are also found in use amongst the Bengali Muslims, the use

of which, according to Md. Iaqub Ali, should be banned. (P 37).

Many upper caste Hindus like Brahmins and Kayasthas with modern outlook after ignoring the barrier of Barnashram, have been carrying on the trade of fishermen. On the other hand, although Islam believes in equality of all men, yet some illiterate Muslims are reluctant to have any social intercourse with the Muslim fishermen and they take their profession to be a degraded one, whereas the Quran itself has commended this trade (P-34).

Now-a-days, many Hindu-influenced ignorant Muslims feel it beneath their dignity to have social intercourse with the Muslims carrying on the trade of cultivation etc. and as per Hindu caste system they also express their unwillingness to dine and sit together with those Muslims. 'In some cases it was also found that some Muslims who were proud of their high-birth, offered Jaigir to some Muslim students, but in-course of time when those students, were known as coming of cultivators, Nikari, Kalu or Jola families, those high-born Muslims drove them away in order to maintained their own respective family satus or Sarafat. Not only that, those orthodox Muslims expressed their reluctance to pray to Allah standing behined the Alems who were born of the families carrying on the trade of cultivation, whereas these Alems have been stated as the caliph of Nabi Karim in the Hadis Sharif. On seeing this, the author Md. Iaqub calls those Ashrafs fools and thinks that they should consult the Quran and the Hadis to see that there is no place for such meaningless Sarafat in Muslim society (P-39)

But it is important to note that after the Hindu-Muslim conflicts of 1946, the Muslims of East Bengal, who did not accept the profession of fishing, cultivation of betel-leaves, hair-cutting and washing of cloths earlier, have now taken to such professions for the uplift of their own society. This indicates that the Muslim community with modern outlook,

are trying now-a-days, to get rid of casteism like the Hindus, in order to break the prevailing caste barriers among them.

IV

According to Mohammedan doctrine, all free Muslims are treated as equal. A Muslim may enjoy the right to marry any woman outside or within the prohibited degrees, which is almost akin to the English Law of Marriage. Of course, spouse must belong to a spiritual or revealed religion, but some kinds of food are forbidden to them. The Hindu caste system is entirely incompatible to the tenets of Islam, as in case of the Hindus if a man or woman marries a woman or man respectively outside their own religious faith, they are condemned.

Amongst the Muslims of foreign descent whose ancestors brought the religion of the Prophet into India, Saiyed, Sheikh, Pathan and Mughal are not castes, though usually spoken of as such ; they are not even groups. Those are simply name given to groups of people that were supposed to be of similar blood. The above is the view of Mr. Blunt reflected, in his work. "The Caste System amongst the Muslims in Uttar Pradesh."

But according to Dr. R. C, Majumdar, the Hindu Caste System also influenced the Muslims of Bengal, resulting into the creatian of some special classes of Muslims.

Amongst the Muslims of Bengal, the Saiyed who claim to be the descendants of the Holy Prophet, Ali (Learned and educationist), Sheikh (Peer) etc. are treated as higher classes. They receive special reverence and are persons of honour. The Kazis (who are high Officials) and the Mollahs are treated to be a bit higher in status than ordinary common people. Besides, the Turks, Pathans and Mughals are treated to be of different classes. But this classism amongst the Muslims is not as rigid as in the case of the Hindus, and they

do not suffer from social disabilities like restriction in food and drink.

Amongst the lower class Muslims, there are many divisions according to their ancestral profession. They are classified into—(1) Gola, (2) Jola, (3) Mukeri (those who carry the commodities for sale on bulls' back), (4) Pithari, (5) Kabari (who are fish-seller or butcher), (6) Sanakar, (7) Hazam. (8) Tirkar, (9) Kagazi (who manufacture paper), (10) Darji (tailor), (11) Benta (weaver), (12) Rangraj (printer), (13) Halan and (14) Kasai (butcher).

Crook has observed the following peculiarties of caste system among the converted Muslims:

According to him, "The Muslims belonging to the divisions like Saiyed, Sheikh, Pathan and Mughal are supposed to be of similar blood, and these names are said to be simply names given to groups of tribes. But this hypothesis is not at all applicable in case of the Muslims who have been converted from Hinduism." "Caste", says Mr. Crook, "is not confined to votaries of the Hindu faith alone. On the contrary, it is much more social than religious. It is one of the most perplexing problems which beset the Christian missionary to reconcile the restrictions of caste with the perfect liberty of Christianity. But Islam has boldly solved the casteism whatsoever by adopting and recognising caste in its fold." According to Crook. "The converted Rajput, Gugar and Jat remain as members of their original sects or sections and also retain most of those restrictions on social inter-course, inter-marriage and the like, which are at per with the present conception of caste. According to Mr. Ibbetson, "Almost the only difference which the convert makes, is to have his scalp-lock and the edge of his mocustachecut, to repeat the Mohammedan creed in a mosque and to add the Mohemmedan even to the Hindu marriage ceremony."

But Crooke's statement in regard to caste amongst the converts requires due amendment, as no convert, according

to religious sanctions, could remain a member of his original sect or section, as said by Crooke, for his conversion would automatically make him an outcaste.

Of course, a convert could retain the name of his sect, but he must henceforth have to look for his wife and his friends outside his original sect. In many cases they use the Hindu mode of address, such as "Thakur," and button their coat in the Hindu fashion, on the left side instead of on the right, which is a Muslim fashion of tailoring. There are many converts from Hinduism who conceal their Hindu past due to some reason or other. They are strict and bigoted in the observance of the rituals of Islam. Nevertheless, it is observed that many converts, after conversion, had not changed or partially changed their social customs. Though in theory Islam should not admit the validity of any alien custom which is contrary to or in conflict with its own doctrines in practice. However, it has accepted the policy of compromising with the observance of original customs of the Hindus observed by the converts, as and when it had been necessary. Besides, more than once in the law courts, it has been decided that a convert may follow or retain his original laws and usages, and may be governed by them even after conversion. A Muslim may choose as his wife any woman outside the prohibited degrees, who professes one of the Scriptural religions. These legal restrictions persist in both the sects like Sunni and Shia of Islam, but it is held important only in case of the former. The customary restrictions which are prevalent amongst all the Mohammedans are alike. Besides the four principal divisions, such as Saiyed. Sheikh, Pathan and Mughal who are descendants of Mohammedan invaders, there are a certain number of Mohammedan castes, a large number of which have a few members, who have been converted to Islam,

According to Blunt, who made a study on conversion in U. P. it was found that—"Apart from the four principal

tribal divisions emerging from Mohammedan invaders, there are a few other Mohammedan 'castes', a large number of which have a few members, who have embraced Islam. The Census Report of 1901 showed in all 133 castes that were wholly or partially Mohammedan, and the reports of 1911 showed only 94, having a good many small castes jumbled under a single head. Of these, 54 in 1901 and 41 in 1911, had less than 1,000 Mohammedan members, and so can be neglected altogether. Certain other entries of 1901 may also be neglected for other reasons. These are the Hijra, Kunera, Lakhera, Kabariya, Nalband, Nanbai, Qalaigar, Raj, Rangsaz and Habshi. The Hijras are eunuchs ; they cannot obviously be counted as a true caste. The Habshis are descendants of Abyssinian slaves of the Oudh Court, now extinct. The Nalband (Farrier), Nanbai (Baker), Qalaigar (Tinsmith), Raj (Mason) and Rangsaz (Painter) are occupations, not castes. The Kunera is a Barhai sub-caste. Lakhera and Kabariya are merely other names for Churihar and Kunjra respectively.

The rest can be divided into three broad classes according to the following :—

(1) Castes now entirely Mohammadan, though recruited partly or wholly from Hindu converts—These are Atashbaz, Baidguar, Bhand, Bhathiyara, Bhishti, Bailoch, Bisati, Dafali, Dogar, Gaddi, Gandhi, Gara, Ghogar, Ghosi, Murkiya, Iraqi, Jhojha, Julaha, Kanmail, Khanzada, Khumra, Kingariya, Lalkhan, Malkana, Mirasi, Nau-Muslim, Niyariya, Pankhiya, Qalandar, Qassah, Ranghar and Turk.

(2) Castes with larger Mohammedan than Hindu branches —These are the Churihar, Darzi, Dhuniya, Kunjra, Manihar, Meo or Mewati, Rain, Rangrez, Saiqalgar and Tawaif.

(3) Castes with larger Hindu than Mohammedan branches —These are the Ahir, Baghban, Baheliya, Banjara, Barhai, Bhangi, Bhat, Chamar, Chhipi, Chik, Dharhi, Dhobi, Dom, Goriya, Gujar, Halwai, Jat, Kahar, Kambob, Kumhar, Lohar,

Mali, Mallah, Mochi, Nai, Nat, Rajput, Saini, Sonar, Tagh and Teli.'

Murray T. Titus states—"As in case of the Hindu idea of four fold social divisions, such as Brahman, Kshatriya, Vaishya and Sudra so in some parts of the country, the converts to Islam consider that they are bound to enroll themselves as either Saiyed, Sheikh, Mughal or Pathan.

There is a strong tendency of the converts from among the Hindus to assume a position in one of the recognised groups of Sharif Jats as far as practicable. The one that is most affected by such converts is one of the two that imply Arab origin, namely Sheikh. However, there is another explanation for the assumption of this title, which probably gives a more correct interpretation of the reason for its use, The term "Sheikh" is widely used as a term of respeet for an old man, a learned man or a great man ; hence many converts who had nothing in their origin to boast of, adopted this respectable designation, and so have formed into a separate caste. There is an old saying in this respect, "Last year I was a Jola (weaver), this year a Sheikh ; and next year, if the harvest be good, I shall be a Saiyed." But not all converts have assumed one of the fourfold classifications.

This is particularly true of the agricultural and high caste converts. The Rajputs, the Jats, and the Ahirs for the most part, retain their identity on embracing Islam, and one of the important Muslim families of Oudh still keeps the original caste title "Thakur" along with the title of "Nawab."

Converts from the lower caste Hindus and outcastes, as a rule, go by the name of Neo-Muslims, or newly converted Muslims.

There is a wide range of caste names found in the second division of Muslims, such as, Jola, Teli, Bhat, Jogis and the like. Most of them indicate occupation as the Teli who

makes oil (Tel). Most of them are just the old Hindu caste or guild-name carried over.

There is even a caste, called the "Kalal". in north India, which is engaged in liquor-dealing, quite contrary to the precepts of rhe Islamic faith.

This picture of casteism in the Muslim society of U.P and other places was also true in the Muslim society in Bengal. In course of time, the pattern became uniform throughout the length and breadth of India.

V

There is practically no caste system amongst the Christians. What prevails amongst the Christians in the name of caste system is but colour and professions system. In the Christian world, two divisions as white and black, according to complexion of the racial stock, are found. Besides, there are two religious sects as Roman Catholic and Protestant, like the Shiah and Sunni, in case of Muslims. Of course, there is another sect known as Oriental or othodox Christian. Marriage amongst the above sects is allowed, provided just before marriage, the bride changes her faith to that of her would-be husband. But this is not followed rigidly in all cases The converted Christians selected by the author for study, belong to both the sects, Protestant and Catholic. Besides. it is strange that in the same family, while the father was found to be a Protestant, his son was a Catholic. But these converts were originally, mostly Scheduled Castes like, Teor and Rajbanshi. After embracing Christianity, they call themselves Indian Christian, and no casteism is prevalent amongst them, though they have retained the Hindu naming system and observe many Hindu religio-social rituals, which have been discussed in the relevant chapter of this book.

VI

Since introduction of Brahmanical rigidity in Benaal in the caste system and implementation of Kaulinya system by Ballal Sena the upper caste people have been looking down upon the lower caste people. They not only made the lower caste people untouchable but also deprived them of doing religi ous works by themselves. Some of them even used to take bath, after they had perchance trodden the shadow of a low-caste man. The people of lower caste could not receive education with those belonging to the upper castes. After all, they had to serve the upper-caste people in many respects and various other social disabilities were also imposed on them, with a view to keeping prominent the distinction between man and man. The upper caste people always used to suppress the lower caste people economically and socially in the same way as at present some land-lords or Zaminders, industrialists or big merchants and others of this type are found to deprive many workers and day-labourers of their leigitimate share of wages and other comforts.

In order to outdo the rigidity of caste system and bring the educationally, economically and socially degraded backward classes to the level of those socially upgraded people who are educationally and economically well off, the Government of India have made some special contitutional provisions for the formers. The Indian Constitution has provided special privileges for low caste people in the form of awarding stipends and scholarship in the field of education and reservation of posts in services and seats for political representations in the legislatures. The underlying intention of making such provision is to bring the socially degraded have-nots to the level of the socially upgraded haves.

The special provision for political represntations in the lagislatures, and even in the services for a reasonably limited period were initially necessary so that the scheduled castes,

tribes and backward classes in the Hindu community by taking advantage of those special privileges might have caught up with the rest of the people in course of fairly long period after which the privileges should have to be withdrawn. But as a matter of fact these previleges have ultimately turned out to be some sorts of vested interests which they not only refuse to give up but are apparently determined to have steadily widened, as this has been being borne out by successive extensions of such conditional provision on the resolute insistence from some interested quarters.

The backward communities certainly deserves certain special opportunities, as they are not in a position to compete with others because of their backwardness. But no community or a section of community as such should be permanently labelled backward inspite of their subsequent economic and educational upgradedness. There are many among the scheduled castes and backward classes who are both educationally and economically much better of than many among the non-scheduled castes. So special provisions on the basis of caste which is nothing but an accident of birth thus seem to be contrary to the democratic principles of equal right to all section of people and obstinate barrier to national integrity.

The absence of a uniform civil code for the nation as a whole is another obstinate barrier to the national integration. Birth control is not applicable in case of the Indian Muslims and polygamey though made banned by legislation in case of the Hindus is not made so in case of the Muslims. Social laws are no doubt a powerful integrating force in a society as much as they help generate a commom social outlook among all the citizens irrespective of caste and creed. But in India social laws for the Muslims are different in some important respects from those for others. Here also vested interest as in case of provisions for scheduled castes and tribes of some interested sections of the community stands in the way of implementing an integrated or uniform civil code, despite some occasional

demands for it from some progressive quarters. As, if birth control and poligamy become the example of some progressive mindedness and beneficial to the community why it should not be applicable in case of the Muslims in India, though it is banned in some Muslim countries like Pakistan, Iran, Iraq and Turkey etc. It is curioursly enough that some leading personalities are united in their unqualified support to the presservation of the privileges of the scheduled castes and tribes and separate civic code for the Muslims.

Heavy refugee influx in West Bengal after partition has caused relaxation in the rigidity of caste system to a great extent. Many families of various castes from different districts in East Bengal after coming across the border have settled together in many places and formed new societies there in. Most of them are unacquinted to each other and do not know even who belongs to which caste and whose family background is what. This unfamiliarity has practically helped both the higher and lower caste people enjoy some economic and social facilities. For many upper caste people having profession non-indicating surnames such as Choudhury, Das, Roy, Mondal, Halder, Sarkar, Biswas, etc. which all from a Muslim to a Brahmin can use, are found, on the one hand, to enjoy amongst the unknown society some facilities earmarked for the scheduled castes and Tribes but on the other hand in matrimonial affairs they always look for spouses of their own caste in order to maintain their social status and so called birth sanctity. After all according to their own necessity they can identify themselves as either lower or upper caste and share the educational and employment facilities which are kept reserved for the scheduled caste and tribes etc.

Of course, many of them are learnt to do so for enjoying educational facilities and securing jobs etc. as in these hard days of unemployment many posts are kept vacant for long for the scheduled caste and tribes and other backword classes for want of requisite number of such people, whereas

thousands of caste Hindus with requisite qualification and experience as well remain without jobs. Not only that, educational qualifications and upper age limit are relaxed to a great extent in case of scheduled castes and tribes etc. In this respect it will not be out of place to note here that the backward classes should be given as at present the preferential treatment in regard to educational facilities and in the matter of application for services they should be allowed to enjoy partial remission of fees and age relaxation which is done at present. But as to qualification for a particular post minimum requirements should not be the satisfactory factor and in this case care should be taken to make use of the maximum qualifications from among those who apply for a particular office. It should not be afforded to sacrifice the efficiency of the services at the altar of communal party. If it is afforded administrative efficiency, in future, may fall down to an unsatisfactory limit.

Some upper caste people only should not be blamed for their sharing the facilities earmarked for scheduled castes and tribes by suppressing their original castes. Many people belonging to the scheduled castes also after coming over to this part of Bengal from the other side, have changed their professional surnames and have accepted some surnames like Chakraborty, Mitra, and Ghosh (not milk man) etc. earmarked for the Brahmins and Kayasthas along with some caste non-indicating surnames like Roy. Das, Biswas, Majumdar, Bhowmik, Haldar, Choudhury, etc. which are in use among the people from the Brahmin to Sudra and Muslims as well. In the new social set-up i. e. in the unknown societies many of them make themselves known as Brahmin or Kayasthas in order to raise as such their social status and on the other hand many have established matrimonial relationship with higher castes by suppressing their original caste.

On detection, many of these cases have ended in bitterness.

On the other hand, in many cases, the upper caste people with modern outlook, inspite of reluctance, have ultimately reconciled themselves with this new trend. Various reasons, such as job or matrimonial scope etc., of course, have led to this social change.

But still there are certain snags to this change-over. For instance, if somebody of a low-caste family gets higher education, or acquires certain other good qualities, his achievements are, in some cases, not given proper recognition to by many higher caste people. If he commits a lapse or mere misdeed, he is severely condemned and is to face bitter criticism as most of such class of men have neither anything to be proud of their forefathers and nor any good family background.

But when this occurs in the families of some higher caste people, they sometimes can escape criticism as many of them generally have good family background and have many things to boast of their forefathers. Besides, people belonging to high born families generally refrain from doing any misdeeds lest the prestige of their laudable families is jeopardised whereas the people belonging to the low-born families generally do not feel such apprehension. Many lower caste people inspite of having good education suffers from inferiority complex whereas the upper caste people suffer from superiority complex which practically lead all the people of both higher and lower castes to mental separation, though outwordly many of the former group camouflage to have no hatred for the latter group. What is more, it is found in the same family that if one with modern outlook does not believe in casteism, the other with sofisticated idea follows the rigidity of caste system and fosters in mind the utter hatred for the lower caste people ; although all great men have denounced caste system and asked to demolish the caste barrier. But who follows this whole heartedly ?

The upper castes are generally reluctant to have social intercourse with the people of the so called lower ranks. They even prevent their children from mixing with them.

All these factors practically lead the low-caste people to desperation and as a counter measure they now suppress their own caste and surname, and introduce themselves as belonging to the ranks of upper-caste people.

Now-a-days, professional men such as carpenetrs, blacksmiths, washermen shoe-makers and pot-makers etc. do not always pursue their traditional professions for their livelihood. They can enjoy the facilities in respect of education and jobs reserved for scheduled castes and tribes, etc. After reciving education, they now take to the professions of teachers, clerks, engineers and physicians, etc. On the other hand for want of employment many upper-caste people with higher education and many of them with or without general education, carry on the professions of carpenters, washerman, shoe-makers, artisans, idol-makers, etc. which were once done by the people belonging to either backward class or scheduled caste, who had to pursue such professions according to the then social sanction.

The regidity in casteism and caste prejudices has now-a-days to a great extent, been relaxed or thwarted. At present, a Brahmin is found to work as a salesman in a shoe-store, or in a shoe manufacturing company, which was once deemed to be very derogatory and caste unbefitting to the Brahmins and Kayasthas. All these phenomena indicate that use of "professional surname" is going to be ceased. Of course, since the introduction of casteism up to early 20th century, a man could best be known by his surname, as to what he was, because then a Karmakar used to work as a blacksmith, a Sutradhar as a carpenter. During the Medieval Age under Muslim rule in India, those who had been employed to collect Choth (tax collector) where known as 'Choudhury." Likewise Bakshi, Mudsuddi, Sarkhel, Mukaddam, Tarafder, Sarkar,

etc. were profession-indicating surnames used by the Hindus and the Muslims alike on the basis of professions they had taken to. In ancient time specially during the Vedic Age, when at first casteism was introduced in the society on the basis of work done by a man, a Kshatriya could then be a Brahmin by doing spiritual work like Jag, Jajna, etc. A Brahmin likewise could be a Kshatriya by doing martial deeds. After all, then there was no rigid caste barrier, and as such a man could easily change his caste by changing his profession. For instance, it may be cited here again that Viswamitra who was a Kshatriya, later on by undertaking the course of a austerity and meditation for long twelve years at a stretch, became a Brahmin.

VII

As the professional title in the modern economic set-up and rapid industrialisation and urbanisation, has practically been useless, so in this age of scientific advancement many are found not to be so inclined to think of what caste they belong to. As a result, the use of professional surname, which is now in vogue, is in the process of being cast off. The day is not far off, when use of caste-indicating titles will cease, either voluntarily or by legislation, for the sake of a greater national unity.

The caste-ridden Hindu and Indian Muslim societies could have enjoyed the fruits of real freedom and enlightened themselves, if they could understand the importance of the term "Freedom", as stated by Netaji Subhas Chandra Bose. He stated, "Freedom implies not only emancipation from political bondage, but also equal distribution of wealth, abolition of caste barries and social inequalities and destruction of communalism and religious intolerance."

VIII

The caste system has got its both merits and demerits. As to merit, this system has helped the Hindus largely in

preserving their religion and culture. The exclusiveness in policy in castes did not allow the Hindus to mix with the foreigners so the Greeks, the Sakas, the Huns and the Muslims could not conquer Hindu culture. On the other hand most of them were absorbed into the Hindu-fold. The caste system based on the sound economic principle of division of labour, practically ensures efficiency of production. As, a person from his birth could know what profession he was destined to follow later on, so from the start he began to devote all his energy to his ancestral profession. As a result there was no dearth of highly skilled workers and scholars of various fields. The castes enforced social and economic discipline among the members of the respective castes. As inter-caste marriage was then forbidden, racial purity could be maintained to a great extent. But now-a-days due to relaxaion in the rigidity of caste system it is difficult to find out the required number of people of some profession indicating castes. As for example it is very difficult to find out priests at the time of offering pujas to the god and goddesses, as now-a-days this profession is not at all profitable whereas the persons dealing in electric lights and decorations etc. make considerable money out of their business at the times of various worship.

As to demerit of caste system it can be clearly concluded that this system has done more harm than good to the society. Sir Henry Maine describes the caste system as the most disastrous and blighting of human institutions. After all caste system is antinational. In old age at the time of grave foreign attack only a section of the people i.e. the Kshatriyas only fought against the foreign invaders. The people belonging to the other castes being ignorant of fighting and thinking fighting to be unbefitting to their castes, stayed away in their respective homes. This led the nation to many unforeseen defeats and disasters, Besides, caste rivalries were also responsible to a great extent for many

troubles during the time of the Rajputs and the Marathas. The caste system was based on the principle of birth whereas according to the Gita the social divisions should have been based on Guna and Karma i.e. character and function. As the present Indian caste system was later on, based on birth, it makes no provision for low-born talents to shine and high-born in-competents to occupy a low position, In this way it is also open to grave and real criticism. The present caste system practically has been responsible for narrow outlook and caste exclusiveness Till recent time many Hindus are found to live as per their caste customs and hardly to bother about the general affairs of the country. As a result it hindered the growth of nationalism An average Indian lives conservative life.

The chief curse of the caste system is untouchability. Many upper castes once did not think the low-caste Sudras even as human beings. They were treated with sheer contempt and their shadow even defiled the upper caste people. They were not allowed to touch the utensils, clothes and water of the upper castes. Their touch was unbearable. What is more, those people could not even draw water from the wells of the upper castes to quench their thirst and could not worship in the temples of the upper castes. These group of people were not treated as men but as cattle. Under this system a large section of Indian people were practically deprived of their legitimate human rights in the society. Of course, in order to uproot this social evil the Govt. of India banned untouchability in all its shape and forms in the new constitution of Indian.

Caste system denies equal rights to all and it is anti-democratic. A man under this system cannot join any profession he likes. Nor does every man high or low enjoy the same social status and privileges. Nor can a man marry a woman of his own choice. All these social disabilities are really opposed to the very spirit of democracy.

Rawlison opines that the caste system rendered the growth of a national spirit almost impossible by splitting the people into a number of water-tight compartments. And it was one of the reasons for which India fcr centuries was at the mercy of foreign conquerers.

According to R. P. Masani class consciousness is good but when it kills national consciousness it becomes a serious draw back. "Caste patriotism is valuable as the first step to nationalism but when it degenerates into sectarianism and checks the growth of nationality, it is an unmitigated evil. Caste loyalty is a virtue but when it degenerates into passive disloyalty to the state. it is a positive crime. Caste restrictions on actions, likely to undermine the foundations of the social structure are-whole some ; but when such restrictions lead to disabling inequalities and denial of social justice, as in the case of the untouchables, now mercifully called Harijans, they are a curse."

Practically speaking caste system has broken the solidarity of the Hindu society. It has become the instrument of opprssion dy suppressing the liberty of individuals. This system has now outlived 'its utility as in modern times it is difficult to live according to the caste-rules and prejudices. Principal R.P. Sharma opines that it is as if a bad coin. We should melt it and remint the same for our modern use.

MARRIAGE INSTIUTIONS AMONG THE HINDUS, THE MUSLIMS AND THE CHRISTIANS

Marriage has grown as an institution from a very long past. It will be interesting to refer here incidentally to, various forms of marriage along with various restrictive disabilities to the establishment of smooth social relations through marriage. In primitive days sexual instinct brought the people of opposite sexes closer and closer. Ultimately their sexual union had brought forth the present progeny of human generation. This union, in the later stage, was nomenclatured as marriage which, in a more refined way, is called an institution. This marriage institution, in the real sense, is the basis of family.

Family helps maintaining social traditions which embody various types of rites observed by the people for generation after generation and any deviation is considered to be an act against convention. Rites relate not only to marriage but spread over the various stages of life from birth to death. From the formation of the embryo in the womb till after the consignment of the last remnants to funeral pyre, rituals are performed at every stage, according to supernatural spiritual, religious and superstitious beliefs of a particular community. Many rites have been enjoined to be observed according to the instructions of the authors of the Smritis or Sastras of Hindu religion, the Hadith or the Quran of the Muslims, tenets of the Bible or Testaments of the Christians. All these are written in the spiritual or religious guide books of the people of different faiths of the world

From ancient time, i,e, since creation of the Shastras (scriptures) of each faith, or in some cases before the same were brought into being, some rites were handed over down to the next progenies as propriety from the cave painting of Europe to the formation of various beliefs and practices by different religious groups all over the world. Since ancient period marriage has been accepted and solemnised as a

religious institution or sacrament as well as a social bondage guided by law-books of the people of different faiths. Worship of the gods and goddesses by the Hindus and prayer to God and Alla by the Christians and the Muslims as the casė may be are done according to their religious guidelines, on this occasion.

However, the marriage institution is associated with a set of taboos based on respective religious faiths of the people, imposing certain prohibitions or social restrictions. As such, marriage is considered to be a Holy Ordinance having spiritual grace. Its divine bliss leads to solemn obligation to bind by an oath and prayer the two souls of the bride and the bridegroom in a permanent and inviolable union. At present, however, continuance or dissolution of marriage depends on the modern Marriage Acts. Though, according to the law books, dissolution of marriage among the Muslims and the Christians is very easy, it is unthinkable so far as the Hindu marriage conventions are concerned, leaving aside the modern Marriage Laws. Of course, now-a-days divorce on various grounds, such as moral turpitude, mental imbalance, lack of physical fitness, illicit connection etc., has been made easier in case of the Hindus. But this divorce sytem has since long been in vogue among the Muslims and the Christians A Muslim can easily indulge in divorce of his wife if he simply utters thrice as "I leave you" and thus marriage among the Muslim can easily be dissolved. Of course, a Christian cannot leave or divorce his wife so easily as for this purpose he will have to take the help of law court with sufficient grounds behind.

Marriage system may be grouped mainly into – (a) Monogamy, (b) Polygamy, (c) Polyandry (d) Hypergamy (e) Hypogamy (f) Group-marriage and (g) Inter-marriage

Monongamy : It is the system of marriage according to which one man may be allowed to enjoy the social sanction to marry one female only vis-a-vis. It contributes

largely to the welfare of one's spiritual, social and family life. Over and above, this system of marriage is good for one's state and nation with some limitations. At present people of all communities like the Hindus, Buddhists, Sikhs and Jains etc. other than the Indian Muslims, are to observe monogamy strictly as a law. It is relaxable in case of the Muslims, Christians, Jews and the Persians etc. in India specially on religious ground. The Muslims are not to abide by the laws relating to monogamy as it is thought by them to be against the tenets of the Holy Quran, although the progressive minded people of many Muslim countries in the mean time, with a view to checking the horrible growth of population which has since long been telling heavily upon the food and economy of many countries of the world, have banned polygamy and introduced monogamy.

Instead of Civil Marriage Act of 1872 according to which marriage can be solemnized without indulging in religious rites in the Court with the consent of both the couple provided they are adults, another Hindu Marriage Act was passed in 1954 which is applicable in case of any Indian citizen living abroad. On 18th May, 1955 another Marriage Act applicable in case of the Hindus, Budhists, Sikhs, Jains excluding the Muslims, Christians. Persians and Jews, was passed. The codes of both these Acts are that none will be allowed to marry in case he or she has wife or husband living respectively and it will be liable to prosecution if any one marries for the second time inspite of having his or her wife or husband living.

Polygamy : Polygamy is largely in vogue among the people of many religions. In India polygamy was highly prevalent among the Kulin Brahmins of Bengal

According to Islamic book of laws, one has to observe some restrictive marriage rules. At the same time, Muslim law permits a man to have four wives strictly on the condition that he must be able to deal justly and equitably with all

the wives. Since it is practically impossible and absurd to deal fairly or equally with four wives at a time, and as such, it indirectly indicates that the essential meaning of the Quran is that a man should have one wife only.

Polygamy being a burning question of the day, has an important bearing upon Family Planning which has been undertaken by the National Govt. to check the growing increase in population which tells heavily upon the economy and food problem of India. So, an endeavour has been made to comment here some aspects on polygamy and its impact upon Hindu and Muslim religions in India which the majority of the population belong to.

Since ancient time till the age of Vidyasagar polygamy was in force amongst the Hindus and since then though there was restriction in polygamy yet there was no legal bar to polygamy upto 1955 before which polygamy amongst the Hindus not only was in force but was so profusely practised by the Kulin Brahmins that tales go that some Kulin Brahmins used to marry so many women for dowry even at the old age that sometimes they would forget the addresses of their fathers-in-law. As a result, they used to send representatives for keeping constant touch with them. Sometimes, they had been to the houses of thoses fathers-in-law who could make more annual payment to them than that by others. Besides, the grooms even could not find time to go every where, and sometimes they maintained a list containing the names of their fathers-in-law. Such was the affairs of state of polygamy amongst the Hindus and this system would carry some social disabilities with it. Sometimes it so happened that a man of sufficiently old age would marry a teen-aged girl or sometimes a girl of a very little age only to remove in name the burden of an unmarried girl from the shoulders of her parents, as at that time it was very much disgraceful on the part of a man not to give his daughter in marriage before she would attain her puberty or just after she did that. Of course, there was some

historical reasons behind this practice, as from late ancient to late medieval period, India was invaded by the foreigners who had a fascination for Hindu women, as most of the invaders who had come down over to India without famale members used to marry forcibly the indigenous women in a very large scale which also indirectly helped introduction of Hindu customs amongst the Muslim invaders. Besides, once there was the system that, if a Hindu woman would be excommunicated, the whole family was considered to be outcast which also was the case of rigidity in the then caste system. The Hindu specially the Brahmins had to give their daughters in marriage at sufficiently early age. Of course, child marriage is not outruled in case of the Muslim also.

Polygamy was found prevalent even in ancient time amongst the people of various faiths. It was in force amongst the Jews. Hajrat Mussa, Ibrahim Daud, Sulaiman etc. the Prophets and Sultans had many wives. To increase the number of population was thought by the Muslim, to be the desire of Allah. Not only that, they practised polygamy sometimes to strengthen the group. Besides, the system of polygamy might have been adopted by them due to out-number the female.

Polygamy was also in force amongst the Christian society. The famous and powerful Social Reformers like St. Agustin and Luther were not against this system. In 1830 under the leadership of Joseph Smith an American Christian society named Mormen deemed polygamy as a part and parcel of their religion. Though an endeavour had been made to reform this idea in 1890, yet that religious prejudice was not removed In this respect it will not be out of place to make mention here that Jesus Christ himself had not married in his life and marital relation was thought to pollute the religious performances amongst the orthodox Christians. In a Christian society none can marry for the second time before the death of either wife or husband whoever may predecease, or

before legal dissolution of marriage. In case of barrenness of wife, the Hindus used to marry more than one wife for children or successors.

The Negroes practise polygamy not to meet biological urge but mainly to show wealth gained through bride price and power in the society. It is heard that Negro king Noanga had seven thousand queens. A Negro leader named Tunda is said to have one hundred wives. The married women were guarded by eunuchs or sexually disabled persons. Even in the modern time the king of Binen of West Africa is known to have six hundred wives and the king Mtessa of Uganda of East Africa is heard to have seven hundred wives. So polynamy was at first its height in Africa both from the point of frequency and number of wives.

Polygamy amongst the inhabitants of Fizzi Island is widely in practice. The kings of this island are heard to have generally more than one hundred queens who always used to quarrel amongst themselves. So the husband in order to check them used to preserve a special type of stick.

In India polygamy was is prevalence amongst the Kulin Brahmins of Bengal. The Bunas of Bengal also are in practice of this system. A Buna can marry as many wives as he can maintain. Polygamy amongst the Kulin Brahmins of Bengal continued upto the time of Vidyasagar with a view to changing their stereotype taste. Besides, somebcdies prefer this in order to meet biological urge continually which in case of monogamy leads to a great handicap during the monthly course, pregnancy as well as long absence of wife while she remains in her paternal house. So polygamy finds favour with the man of the above nature. This reason has led many to prefer polygamy. Besides, to look after the family many rich cultivators and the tribal people like Santal, Munda, Bhuinya and Lodhas are found to have more than one wife. Outnumber of women also had led to this practice in some human societies. Social superstition in

some cases, were also found responsible for implementation of polygamy as was in case of the Hindu Kulins who deemed it sinful to keep marriageable daughter unmarried in the family and they thought it pious to give one's daughter in marriage before she attained her puberty. Of course, this has a scientific reason as to save the feminine sanctity of a girl from her being polluted by other man after attaining puberty. In the Christian community none can marry before the expiry of either wife or husband whoever may be or before legal dissolution of marriage. In case of barrenness of wife, the Hindus would indulge in remarriage and for having sons many of them used to marry more than one woman.

India Govt. have drawn a permanent curtain on polygamy so far as the Hindus are concerned, order to put a check to horrible increase in population leading to tremendous scarcity in foodgrains and unemployment as well. The Govt. have passed an Act namely Hindu code bill in 1955 declaring that a man or woman having more than one wife or husband, will not be employed in any government service. If a Govt. employee ,during the life time of his or her wife or husband, has to marry for the second time, he or she will have to divorce his or her wife or husband showing reasonable grounds, otherwise he or she will not be allowed to marry more than once. Bigamy has been prohibited. Besides, marriage subsequent to the first marriage while first wife is living, has been declared a void-marriage under Hindu code bill.

Polygamy as it appears from the examples quoted here, most probably was restricted to the well-to-do families and this system was a fashion to the then kings and emperors irrespective of religion. Polygamy could not find its way good enough amongst the common people due to economic and various other reasons.

Though according to the Quranic law Muslims can be allowed to marry four wives provided one can satisfy the four at a time which also has got social sanction, yet it has been conclu-

ded by Dr. Forel that 95% and 98% of the Indian and Persian Muslims respectively are monogamous. It is also found that those who have more than one wife they generally lay more importance to one wife only which also characterises the human nature of monogamy. Of course, some experts in the line of sexology divide in opinion.

The proverb—Putrarthe Kriyate Bharja (Wife is needed for a male child) is popularly in force amongst the Hindus. Amongst the Thongh, a tribal people of Africa, it is honourable to have more than one wife. The Nagas also think so and due to hard labour when the beauty of the wife is lost, the husband marries for the second time.

Although according to Islamic book of laws one may practise polygamy, yet in more advanced Muslim views, it has been frankly admitted that polygamy in the present day is an adulterous connexion and is contrary to the spirit of Islam. This opinion is shared by a large number of Muslims. Of course, they are to be faced with the fact that provision of polygomy is sanctioned by the Quranic law, and in regard to the code, it will not be irrelevant to quote here that essential teaching of the Quran is indirectly monogamous, though it obviously indicates polygamy by allowing one to have four wives at the maximum, yet the law again permits a man to have four wives strictly on the condition that he should deal justly with all of the wives. Since it is practically impossible to deal fairly or equally with four at one time which is also absurd, and as such, it indicates that the essential meaning of the Quran is that a man should have but one wife only.

As to polygamy in Islam, it is allowed only as an exception. It is expressly so stated in the Holy Quran ; And if you fear that you cannot act equitably towards orphans then marry such woman as seems good to you, two and three and four, if you fear you will not do justice (between them) then (marry) only one (4 : 3). This seems to be the only

passage in the Holy Quran that speaks of polygamy and it will be seen that it does not enjoin polygamy ; it only permits and that, too, conditionally. So it is clear from this verse that polygamy in Islam is allowed only when there are orphans to be dealt with and if it is feared that they will not be dealt with justly. This condition relates more to the welfare of the society than to the needs of the individual.

However, regardless of the Quranic law on the subject of polygamy, the orthodox Muslim means on the example of Prophet Mohammed who had more than one wife, that one can have more than one wife. There is an increasing opposition to it especially among the Muslim female folk. As a result at the All India Conference held in 1924 a resolution opposing the marriage of women to men already married, was passed. So much so the purdah system is on the wane amongst the Muslim society in the teeth of strong opposition of the ulra-conservative groups. Besides, the number of educated Muslim women who are coming out of seclusion to have free mixing, is steadily increasing. Though there is a considerable amount of prejudice to overcome the conservative groups both in India and Pakistan, yet some very changes in Muslim society have been made in the last few decades which register marked advance. This social change, of course, has been taking shape, being influenced by the Western culture and partially by the converted Muslims and the Hindu wives of the Muslim population and then by the influence of the Hindus who have also been modernised on the Western pattern shaking off their old prejudices or superstitions in various ways as to discourage child marriage, polygamy, burning of the widowed women with their husbands, widow marriage, taking only vegetables by the widows and caste system etc. Amongst the Hindus much progress by overcoming various meaningless social disabilities is also evident from the Vidya-sagarian time when widow marriage was promulgated. Of course, the Muslims were more advanced in this regard, as

Prophet Mohammad himself had his first wife a widowed lady. As to Christians, they were much more advanced in all respect. Among the orthodox Christians child marriage, seclusion of women, burning of women were not at all in force. Women in the Christian society were as free as men. They enjoy the liberty to dissolve their marriage according to their sweet will and can marry as many times as they like giving rise to the crude form of parental affection which is also found amongst the Muslims as in both of these two societies the women are found to leave their husbands with their children and marry for the second or third time as they like, whereas amongst the Hindus a woman before implementation of widow marriage could never marry for the second time leaving their children and after implementation of widow marriage the women folk of higher caste excepting with ultra modern idea, hardly marry for the second time leaving her children as destitutes. Of course, now-a-days even the Hindu married women are found to divorce her husband sometimes on some flimsy grounds leaving the children ; though divorce incomparison to the Muslims and Christians, is much more strict amongst the Hindus, yet now-a-days divorce has been registering marked progress amongst the Hindus putting the children, in some cases to their utter helplessness and sufferings. As such, present day divorce system in some cases, is pernicious to the stability, happiness, comfort and peace of the family. So it should be expunged from life if not totally at least partially by the imposition of some restrictions as has been done in case of polygamy in the Hindu Society. Of course, the teaching of the Quran in respect of polygamy is to be justified on the grounds that it is a rational attempt to meet the needs of human society which outside Islam, is made by legalized forms of prostitution. It should be justified if it is beneficial or subversive to the well being of the society. There can be no two opinions in this regard. According to Prof. Khuda Bakhsh who takes contemporary Muslim

reformers to tasks and opines in all fearlessness that "the author of Reforms under Muslim Rule seeks to make out that polygamy is an institution which Islam does not sanction," which he does not admit. According to him the concensus of the opinions is otherwise. He admits that with the spread of female education and freedom the curse of polygamy will no doubt, die out. Of course, various schools of various opinions vary as to whether polygamy should be retained or done away with and if it is compatible with the present days' need. But in general sense Islamic world of today, condemns it as pernicious and harmful as well to the stability in happiness, comfort and peace of the family and as such, they advocate its expunction frcm their law. There can be no two opinions on this point. According to Khuda Bakhsh the social corruption behind the Zanana is to a large extent, due to this system.

According to Muslim law, marriage with Ahl-ul-ketab and Kafir is otherwise, which was opposed by Akbar, the great who introduced marriage amongst the Hindus and the Muslims putting an end to the religious ideas of the fanatic Mullah for establishment of relationship between the people of different communities.

The people of Persian Shiah Community can marry for one hour upto ninetynine years of age. This system of temporary marriage is known as "Mutaah". This was implemented amongst the Shiah Muslims for the foreigners, merchants, soldiers and travellers. The woman of Sahara Desert are said to deem it a fashion to change husbands repeatedly. They look down upon the women who lives a family life with one husband for a long time and think it a nasty or nuisance practice to have continued and long sexual relationship with the same man.

Polyandry : Another very interest evoking marital system is polyandry which is quite reverse to polygamy. Polygamy permits a man to have more than one wife whereas polyandry allows a woman to have more than one husband. This system,

it is thought, was implemented, most probably on the ground of scarcity of women, poverty and superstitions. In ancient time, it appears from the Mahabharata, the system of polyandry was in force ; the five hasbands of Droupadi reveal it. This system, to some extent, is found prevalent amongst some south Indian people like the Todas of south India, some communities of the Island of Canary, Tibetans and Eskimos. The Tibetans on the other hand, are thought to have adopted this system to put a check to the growth of population for scarcity of cultivable land and food. Again some societies prefer polyandry only to ensure getting children. The wives of the eldest brothers of some communities like Jaunsari living by the side of the road running from Chyarata to Deradun and the Jath of the Punjab, become the wives of younger brothers of their husbands. This is practised most probably due to poverty. These husbands may be fraternal i.e. brothers of the same uterus or non-fraternal. This system is prevalent amongst the Todas of Nilgiri, Khasas of the Himalayan region. Non-fraternal polyandry system is found prevalent amongst the Tibetans and Nair of the south India. This system cannot be termed rightly as marriage institution and as such, it may. in the real sense, be termed as an open social prostitution which is limited but vulnerable to a great extent, though the husbands look after their respective families within mutual co-operation and domestic environments. In this system, it is found that wife resides with every husband for a few days, especially a married Toda woman does not live for more than fifteen days at a stretch with any husband. The Todas of Nilgiri hill, it is reported, indulge in this system of polynadry only due to the number of females being much less than that of males and this is only due to female infaticide, whereas the Tibetans are thought to have undergone this system to put a check to the growth of population for scarcity of cultivable land. Some school opines that marriage with near relatives leads

mainly to birth of male child which is thought to be baseless and absurd without having any socio-scientific relations as well. Many tribal people specially some Australoid tribal people take the help of another husband under whose protection they keep their wives while ahunting which gradually has led to polyandry. Again, some society prefers polyandry only to have issues definitely. Some school of sociology opines that free mixing in ancient society was nothing but an instance of polyandry.

The Hindus were highly endogamous. They married within their own caste. But in order to avoid blood relation they marry outside their clan and gotra (lineage). So they are exogamous. But the Hindus once observed Hypergamy under which a bride might not marry a man of a lower social rank than her own. But a groom could do so. A Brahmin could, since ancient time, marry a girl belonging to any of the lower ranks like Kshatriya, Vaisya and Sudra. Likewise a Khatriya could marry a girl belonging to Vaisya and Sudra. A Vaisya could marry a Sudra girl. But a Sudra could marry none else excepting a Sudra girl. An upper caste Hindu could marry beautiful girls of the lower caste people according to their sweet will and this type of marriage is called Hypergamy. But they did not allow their girls to be married to the lower caste people who could not marry a beautiful girl of a higher caste, even if she would have been after their choice. This was nothing but a social disabilities as well as an injustice imposed upon them.

Hypogamy : The people belonging to a higher caste did not allow their girls to be married with the lower caste. This is also a kind of social injustice imposed upon them. If a girl of an upper caste Hindu family would marry a man belonging to the caste lower than that she belonged to, she would have to be outcaste and this type of marriage is called Hypogamy. But if an upper caste Hindu wonld marry a lower caste girl he would not have to loose his caste status. There is

Pauranic reference in regard to this. Santanu, the father of Viswa fell in love with the daughter of a fisherman, and ultimately he being a Khastriya could marry the daughter of that fisherman. Besides, if a man belonging to a lower caste would have committed any nuisance or sin, he could get rid of his sin by giving a feast to the Brahmins for his Prayaschitta (atonement.) This was another instance of social prejudice and injustice done to the lower caste Hindus. But now-a-days that prejudice and injustice have fast been being removed from the Hindu societies and there have been hundreds of inter-caste marriages through advertisements in the news-papers. Of course, Brahmins are seeking matches from Brahmins, Kayasthas from Kayasthas, Vaidyas from Vaidyas and the other lower castes people are expressing their willingness to establish matrimonial relationship to the match belonging to any castes. The orthodox upper caste people who are ultra conservatives are yet reluctant in establishing matrimonial relationship with the people belonging to the caste lower than that of their own deviating from the old system of endogamy. But now-a-days. due to immense influx of refugees in West Bengal following partition of India this system to a great extent has, under various reasons, been jeopardized.

In ancient time uncivilized people used to live in bands or group-life which they did in order to save themselves from the attack of ferocious wild beasts and other enemies. Real communism was then persisting amongst those pre-historic societies when everyone had his right on everything and none had anything separate of his own. Like other enjoyable things, in order to meet biological urge none had female or male separate for his or her own. In the later stage this system was introduced between the two near friendly groups. According to this social development all the males of one group would be allowed to enjoy the females of other group ; likewise the females of one group could enjoy the males of the second group.

This system is known as group marriage and its subsequent system is termed as exogamy i.e., marriage outside one's own group. Group-marriage, according to Bakuphen, was inforce amongst the Lisyan, Etraskan, Cretan, Etheniyan, Lisbeyan and the Egyptian etc. The Todas practise group marriage. Among the Todas, if the elder brother marries, the other brothers need not marry, because the wife of the elder brother is permissible to be shared by the remaining younger brothers and so much so that all the sisters of the wife of the elder brothers are enjoyable to the younger brothers. In these cases of group marriage the children may not have definite fathers. Whenever a man wants to be the father of a child he has to observe the bow and arrow ritual at the advanced stage of the woman who has been enjoyed by many men. By the observation of this social ritual one gets social recognition as the father of a child or more.

Some school of sociology opines that in most of the cases the sexual appetite of a female may be met by a male only whereas a female may not meet the same of a man. Of course, this is controversial as the entire aspect relating to how one should meet one's sexual need, depends upon the socio-geographical condition of a country or its part. Besides, on the point of psychological view continuous sexual relation with a particular female leads to creation of aversion in the male's mind towards that female. This varied and covetous instinct of a male-mind creates a great hindrance to monogamy. Of course, there is exception, as many males and females dislike to satisfy biological urge with many famales and males respectively. The females, according to Dr. Livingstone of South Africa and Mafolola think a man having single wife, to be either miser or timid. The females of those countries are to labour hard, so most probably in order to lessen their burden of labour they desire their husbands should have more than one wife but this is surely not the common instinct of a female body.

Though the Europeans are the supporters of monogamy,

yet they do not maintain their sanctity of monogamy by restricted sexual relation as free mixing and divorce are highly prevalent amongst the Europeans whereas inspite of having no legal obstruction in many cases, the people of most of the Eastern countries are strictly monogamous.

None can assure that monogamous female will not have sexual relation with other man at her post-marital stage. Like wise, a polygamous man who inspite of four wives may enjoy secretly a female other than his wives. Of course, in case of illness or absence of a wife also a male may try to satisfy his sexual instinct by any other woman.

II

During Muslim rule in India marriages between the Hindus and the Muslims were not infrequent on various grounds.

It can safely be concluded that the earliest Muslim invaders came single. Of course, a few wives. later on, could have seized the opportunity of accompanying their warrior husbands. The Muslim soldiers, it is sure, would satisfy their biological urge in any way they found convenient. Celibacy was no part of Islamic law. When those soldiers or generals would defeat or kill the fathers or husbands or guardians of the women in a war, the women fell prey to them. Besides, a woman was considered to be a legal booty after a war, if she could be captured. A woman was generally considered to be one of the considerations of a peace treaty between a Muslim and a Hindu. They were treated so, because of paucity of women and necessity for women as well, as at the outset the Muslim soldiers had hardly any woman with them whereas the Hindus had many. As such, the Muslim generals and soldiers would solve the problem by taking women from the Hindu fold and that was, as if, a natural solution as the Muslim had no scruples about their marriage with the, non-Muslims. Abu Hanifa, the great Muslim Jurist says, "A man who can produce a child and a woman who can bear a child are fit

subjects for marital contract (except prohibited degree) and no Hindu woman falls within that prohibited degree."

Over and above during the period of Delhi Sultanate and Mughal rule in India a good number of Sultans and Emperors had enjoyed many a slave girl. Besides, most of them had harems of their own where many ladies had to remain interned and live secluded life of prostitutes. Many Sultans and the Emperors enjoyed them of their own accord. Eunuchs were made guards of the harems. History is still bearing the painful and agonizing stories of many harem-ladies on whom unspeakable opperession had been made by some lustful Sultans and Emperors. Ala-ud-din Khilji, Firoz Tughluq etc. the lustful Sultans and even the Emperors Akbar and Jahangir had harems. Firoz Tughluq was born of a Hindu mother. His Prime Minister Khan-e-Jahan was originally a Telengana Brahmin. His harem is said to have comprised of two thousand women of different nationalities. He had many children from them. But now-a-days this system is said to be an inhuman and barbaric nature of human beings.

Prior to Akbar Hindu Muslim marriage was first introduced by Babur who got two of his sons married to Medini Rao. Akbar married the daughter of Beharimal of Amber. His son Selim (Jahangir) was betrothed to the daughter of Raja Bhagwan Das of Amber and ultimately was married to the lady. Khasru was the offspring of this union. In addition to that marriage, Jahangir married many other women. The total number of wives in his harem, it is learnt, was more than 800. Shah Jahan was born of a Hindu mother. Besides, the mother of Aurangzeb was also a Hindu lady.

If we look to the affairs of Hindu Muslim marriages during Pathan period, we meet with a good number of such instances. Ilyas Shah married Fulmati a Brahmin widow of Bajrajogini of Bikrampur in the district of Dacca now in Bangladesh. Raja Ganesh, a Hindu king of Bengal married Fulzani, a Muslim widow. Azam Shah was her husband. Besides, his daughter

Aswantara was married to Jadu Sen Jalal-ud-din, the son of Raja Ganesh. The Sultan Hussain Shah's eleven daughters were married to the eleven nephews of Madan Bhaduri whose son Kandarpa Deva was married to one of Hussain's daughters.

It is learnt from the Kulapanjis of Barendra Brahmins that Hussain Shah being an Arab and a Sayyad of a highly respectable community amongst the Muslims, did not like that his daughters and sons should be wedded to the Turks and Afghans as they were thought to be inferior to Arabs in social status. As such, Hussain Shah preferred the Brahmins to the Turks and Afghans for the marriage of his sons and daughters. He preferred so, because the Brahmins were considered most respectable amongst the Hindu community. It is strangely enough that inspite of the message of equality in Islam, stress on 'blue blood' (Sharafat Nasl) was not forgotten by the Arabs..

Chaturanga Khan, a courtier of Hussain Shah embraced Islam bieg influenced by his master. He married a Muslim girl in his old age. He had two sons namely Subi Khan and Suchi Khan by his Muslim wife. They founded the famous Qazi family of Sener Bazar of the district of Khulna.

Pir Ali Brahmins of Khulna Bagerhat trace their origin from the Taher Ali Khan. He was proselytized by Pir Khan Jahan Ali. The children of his Hindu wife are known as Pir Ali Brahmins and those of his Muslim wife are known as Taheria. Besides, Pir Khan Jahan Ali also married a Hindu lady. After marrage his Hindu wife Sonamani became known as Sona Bibi. She was so devoted to her husband that after the death of her husband she drowned herself in a tank.

Maichamoa of Sathira or Champabati was the daughter of a Hindu Raja who was killed and his daughter Champabati was married to a Fakir. She was very much devoted to her husband after whose death she devoted herself to God and obtained some miraculous powers. Her burial ground is now a place of pilgrimage both for the Hindus and the

Muslims. This place known as Maichampa's Dargah is seven miles off from Satkhira. Mirabai, the Hindu wife of Yusuf Shah of Gour became known as Lotan after her cenversion to Islam. She built a beautiful mosque on the ruins of a Hindu temple. Sayyad Murtaza of Jangipur in the district of Murshidabad, was associated with a Brahmin girl. She is revered even now, by the local women as Anandamoyee. As she was a Vaishnava, she was buried by the side of the grave of Sayyad Murtaza. Besides, she embraced Islam being influenced by the Sayyad.

In the name of marrige of Ghazi Mian many festivals are celebrated by the Muslims in lower Bengal, specially in the Sundarban area. The very popular ballad named Kalu Ghazi O Champabati described the story of marriage of Kalu Ghazi, son of Sikandar Shah with Champabati, daughter of Mukut Roy. The rural folk as yet recite the said ballad popularly known as Palagan which is highly appreciated and relished by many Muslims of Bengal.

Now a-days in the changed social pattern with modern outlook the old social prejudices in regard to marriage, can no longer make a Hindu family outcast, if any one of the same establish matrimonial relation with the Muslim. There are hundreds of examples in regard to this. Of those a very few instances are quoted here in support of the above fact as (1) Kazi Nazrul Islam, the well known poet married a Hindu lady. Late Humayun Kabir, the former Minister of India and later on a Member of the Indian Parliament married a woman of a respectable Hindu family and, of late, the Nawab of Pataudi, an elite in the field of Indian sports has also married Sarmila Thakur, a renowned film star. In all these cases the concerning Hindu families were not made outcast as in old age.

Mixed marriage having been as regugnant to Muslim law as it is to Hindu custom, it should have been rare, yet it did occur for various historical as well as social reasons. The

Muslim invaders brought with them a very few women, but for their permanet settlement in India, they felt the necessity of fair sexes to live family lives. And as such, they started keeping to themselves wives from the indigenous people. Of course, after a sufficient number of female folk had been born of these unions to meet their social needs, the usual practice of taking wives from the original inhabitants ceased at a later stage to a great extent excepting the mixed or inter-marriages as occurred in the society during the Sultanate and the Mughal period in India. Intermarriage can promote human relation irrespective of caste and creed. In the modern societies intermarriage is largely in practice among the Hindus, the Muslims and the Christians. Inspite of establishment of matrimonial relationship with the Muslims and the Christians the Hindus are now hardly made outcast. Amir Khusru wrote a Persian poem in regard to marriage between a Gujrat princess named Padmini and Khizr Khan, the son of Ala-ud-din Khilji. A Bhatti Rajput princess consented to marry Muhammad-bin-Tughlaq in order to save her people from the tyranny of the Tughlaq. But most of the time inter-marriage occured amongst high and low were alike, due to presence of Hindu slaves in the harems. In the harems the sexual union was more than mere concubinage and usually had been preceded by the process of conversion. This system of inter-marriage during the Mughal emperor led many cases to the policy of toleration towards the Hindus. As early as 1562 Akbar married the daughter of Raja Behari Mal of Jaipur; the mothers of Jahangir and Shahjahan were both Rajput princesses. Akbar not only married Hindu lady, he also gave his son in marriage with a Hindu girl. Indeed the last mentioned Mughal Emperors and their successors had far more Rajput than Mughal blood in their viens. So much so, intermarriage surely promotes human relationship irrespective of caste creed which was once opposed both by the Hindus and the Muslims. Of course, if a Muslim desired to marry a girl of a

non-Muslim he, at first, had to convert her to Muslim and then to marry whereas in case of Hindus if a girl was married with a Muslim, the whole family was made outcast.

Inspite of these, monogamy, beyond controversy, is in all respect, in favour of welfare of one's spiritual, social and family life. Over and above monogamy, no doubt, is good to one's state and nation. Of course, this should not be strictly followed in all cases as in case of the country where the females outmember males, strict introduction of monogamy will lead to deprivation of conjugal life of many females feeling biological urge which also will not be beneficial to the welfare of the State and restriction in this state of affairs will lead surely to corruption in one's personal life. The permission of having more than one wife in special cases amongst the Muslims might have some social need behind. After great world war it was found that a large number of males were destroyed leading to increase in number of females which might have led to free mixing and polygamy in some countries without which there might have been the possibility of social corruption. Besides, if free mixing, polygamy and divorce on reasonable grounds were not allowed, a great injustice would be done to a great number of females

The Christians are dread against polygamy, yet in order to solve the disparity in number of male and female created out of the war in Britain, of late, in a book Geoffre Pardoe very boldly supported polygamy to outroot social corruption. He has commented that there are so many families where two wives can live quite happily. If the adoptation of second wife is not derogatory to the prestige of the first wife and there remains social licence behind this practice, many females will remain agreeable to accept co-wife. Many unmarried girls will probably welcome this practice. All the surplus unmarried ladies should be encouraged to acquire children which might be possible through marriage. There had, it is reported, been a surplus of 30 lakhs of women in Britain and their conjugal life

would be disturbed, had there remained no such licence. In these days of personal liberty there should not have been any hindrance towards free-mixing and had there remained any such hindrence in the modern social set-up, many unmarried ladies wood have been deprived of legal motherhood for want of proper negotiation which is a burning problem to their society.

III

Different methods of getting wife are prevalent amongst the tribal and non-tribal people of the world. These methods relate to various social rituals.

Those methods of getting wives are as follows :—

Marriage by capture—It is nothing but to marry a girl forcibly without her consent and this system has social recognition. The Gond, Bhils etc., the tribal peoples many times capture marriageable girls forcibly and ultimately marry them secretly. Though this system is not profusely in force, yet it is a custom amongst the Bulgarians that if a woman becomes after the choice of a man who, if can forcibly cohabit with that woman, then the parents of that very woman will not be allowed to disagree to give their daughter in marriage with the male in question. Where there is joint family system, the head of such family exerts his haughty power in personal enjoyment. So much so somewhere after distributing his own old wives to his sons he accepts young ones. The tribal people like Bushman and Bahima of Africa undergo an artificial fight and conceal the bride just before marriage. The marriage takes place if the groom party succeeds in finding out the concealed girl. Amongst the tribal people like the Hoes and the Birhores the would-be groom lies in wait with a view to putting vermilion on the forehead of the would-be spouse and if ultimately he succeeds in doing this, marriage takes place according to social rituals.

Marriage by negotiation : (Prajapatya Bibaha)—At first suitable bride and groom are found out either through rela-

tives or go-between or any marriage organisation or advertisement in the newspaper or mutual contact, then dowry is fixed up with the consent of both the marital parties. Many social rituals in this connection, are observed. This is done normally by the Hindus, the Muslims and the Christians. Besides many tribal people like Lodhas, Hoes observe the system of negotiation through a go-between who fixes up everything prima facie to marriage ceremony on mutual contract between the two concerning parties. The Santals and the Uraos have to pay money or offer clothes. The Lodhas have to offer grass, paddy and rupees in a plate at the time of fixing nuptial date. The Nagar have to pay cutter, shield and various corns. As the bride party get all these things before marriage, manybodies think it to be a "Pan Prothaya Bibaha" (Marriages by purchase.) The Santals, manytimes have to pay groom-price. If due to free mixing a girl becomes pregnanted, the groom is made agreeable on payment of groom-price, to marry the girl in her advance stage and accept the fatherhood. Before marriage the groom party, sometimes, demand a handsome of money, which manytimes goes beyond capacity leading the tribal people like Hoes etc. to indulge in some other system in stray cases. As amongst the societies of Angami and Ao Nagas, there is no bride price, the dignity of female has been reduced, to a great extent.

To obtain a bride or a groom with the exchange of money has been in force amongst many races and it is still in practice amongst many societies. In the Manu Sanhita this system has been described as Asura Bibaha. Westmark termed this marriage as "Marriage by purchase. In British Columbia the bride price is fixed on the basis of beauty and quality of the bride. Now-a-days bride price is seen prevalent amongst the lower class Hindus. This system was reverse during the Roman civilization when instead of bride-price groom-price was demanded, as a result the bride has to come to her husband's house with wealth and property.

New-a-days groomprice or dowry system is in force amongst the higher caste Hindus and many converted Muslims.

The Arsha-form differs from the Asura-form only in degree ; in the latter form the bridegroom gives as much wealth as he can afford to the father and paternal kinsmen and to the bride herself, while in the former the brideprice is something nominal ; a pair or two of kine as in the text of Manu, are offered.

Marriage by exchange (Paltaghar) : According to this system marriages are fixed amongst the marriageable sons and daughters of two families. Among many tribal people of India this system is in practice. The Bhatia of Almorah and the Oraos of Chhotonagpur generally practise this nuptial system. The exchange system is also found prevalent in Australia. Under this system a man obtains wife in exchange of his own mother, sister or daughter.

Marriage by service : In many societies if anyone fails to pay the scheduled brideprice, he has to satisfy his would-be father-in-law by the discharge of his faithful service. The tribal people like Gond and Baiga practise this system. During his servitute in the would-be father-in-laws' house the groom is given food and drink along with dwelling place but he is not allowed to mix with the future bride. After expiry of the stipulated period of service marriage is performed. The tribal people like Kurkee of the Melghat region of Central India practise this system of marriage. In the Bible it is found mentioned that Musa had to serve for a long time in his would-be father-in-law's house with a view to obtaining his wife.

Marriage by trial: Before marriage the groom is to undergo trial of strength. This type of marriage is hardly met with. The tribal people like the Bhils practise this system of marriage. Marriage is performed if the groom succeeds in dance and songs or trial of strength. An Athabaskan tribal groom of America can marry if he wins in a cockfight.

Marriage by intrusion: In this system the groom being disagreeable to marry, the bride comes to his house forcefully. This system is prevalent amongst the Hoes or Birhores. A Birhore girl in some auspicious morning appears in the house of her desired future husband with either Mahua flowers or some food articles. The future mother-in-laws beats her with a broom stick. Sometimes the pungent smoke of pucca (ripe) brinjal is put infront of her nostril but if she does not go inspite of being tortured in this way, the village leaders gather together and approve the marriage.

Marriage on mutual consent: In ancient time this system of marriage was found prevalent in India. It was also called Swayambar protha i,e. in this system the groom himself will be present in a marital convention, to be chosen by the bride who had enjoyed the right to select one groom out of so many intending grooms in a meeting held for this purpose. Sanjucta, the daughter of the Hindu king Jay Chand of India, in this way married the Hindu King Prithwiraj of India, by garlanding the statue of the later in a marital convention where many other intending princes were present to be selected by the princess as would be-groom. According to this system the concerning couples after their selection of each other would exchange garlands in presence of one or two witness in order to finalise the marriage. According to Indian mythology, it is learnt that Arjun married Subhadra, the sister of Krishna in presence of the later and the famous King Dusmanta of Ancient India while ahunting, married Sakuntala in the hermitage of Kanwa in presence of some girls friends of Sakuntala who was said to have had been brought up by the famous sage Kanwa.

Marriage by elopement: When the parents of both the bride and groom become unagreeable, the spouses flee away very secretly to somewhere else where they marry each other. After a few years when a child is born to them, they come back to their own village and have to arrange a

village feast. In this way the marriage gets social recognition. This system of marriage is prevalent specially amongst the Oraons and Lodhas.

Besides, marriage with trees and beasts is also met with in the tribal society. The Oraons, before marriage, are sometimes found to marry mango or Mahua trees with the idea that if any unforeseen catastrophe befalls them, let it befalls those trees. In the Hindu society marriage with pigeon and banana tree is found prevalent. Besides, in case of death of more than three wives. a Hindu is found at first to marry a banana tree, then the real marriage with the bride takes place. Various superstitions relating to marriage are thus met with amongst the tribal and non-tribal people of Inhia.

IV

In ancient time eight types of marriages were prevalent amongst the Hindus. These forms were prescribed by Manu and other law givers. Of these marriages Brahma, Daiva, Arya and Prajapatya were of higher types.

The Brahma marriage is a voluntary gift of a daughter clothed only in a single robe, to a man learned in the Vedas'- i. e. to a Brahman. Of course, this form is now regarded as admissible for many castes, as long as its essential attribute i. e. the absence of any payment for the bride, is present. The Daiva marriage is the marriage in which the daughter with ornaments is gifted to a Ritwik engaged in Jajna. In the Arya marriage a daughter is gifted on receipt of one or two kine from the groom. Prajapatya marriage is the gift of a daughter by uttering words "Practise together religion."

V

The following four types of marriages such as (a) Paisach (b) Rakshasa (c) Gandharva and (d) Ashura also reveal the marital evolution amongst the human society :

Paisach marriage—In this system the girl is married after her Satitwa (Sexual sanctity) is polluted either in her dormant condition or by compelling her to drink wine and making her senseless.

Rakshasa marriage is the marriage in which after either killing or defeating the Kins in a battle the girl is alooped forcefully and then wedded inspite of her unwillingness for marriage. Westmark terms this marriage as Marriage by capture.

Gandharva marriage—It is performed without the consent of the parents but with the consent of both the future bride and groom. The question relating to validity of this marriage has now actually been the business of court. In 1817 a very old case of Gandharva was held valid for Kshatriyas. But now-a-days it requires legal recognition and is thought to be as contrary to morality. But amongst a certain number of low castes and tribal people pre-nuptial immorality is followed by a more permanent union.

Asura marriage—It is nothing but a marriage by purchase in which the bride is purchased in terms of money.

The Rakshasa form has been almost absolete. Some of its essentials according to Manu's definition, are the capture of a maiden by force from her husband, while she weeps and calls for assistance, or after the kinsmen and friends have been slain or wounded in a battle and their houses has been broken. Although it has almost been obsolete as a result of modern law against murder, yet some tribal people of India follow this system. The Gipsy tribes who kidnap women from other communities still preserve the main principle of this form, merely by substituting cunning for force.

At present the most common of all forms of marriage amongst the Hindus, is the 'dowry' marriage. In this marriage the bride's party has to pay bride groom price in the shape of dowry with the bride, without dowry marriage is unthinkable in most cases. It would presumably be classed

as a Brahma marriage in which dowry must be regarded as a gift to the bride and a mere token of affection and not essential to the ceremony. But dowry is really a payment to the groom and as such it clearly ignores the true nature of transaction and a marriage with dowry cannot be considered as Brahma marriage in which the bride should bring with her only "a single robe". Marriage by exchange and marriage by service are both special forms of marriage In the former case the bride price to be paid consists of another bride, in the latter case the bride price is paid by services rendered to the bride's parents. Both are, therefore, special forms of Asura marriage. But Manu in his definition of that type of marriage had never contemplated that the payment would be made in such a manner. These types of marriages are essentially of non-Aryan origin and as such, it is difficult to understand how they can be reconciled with the Hindu law of marriage, if a Court of law would not refuse legal recognition to the marriage by exchange on the ground that it would be contrary to public policy.

VI

In China there are many systems of marriage and some of which have already been obsolete. A go-between is engaged to find out a suitable bride whose name, size of feet month of birth are very minutely investigated. After selection of a bride it is decided by a palmist if the marriage will be auspicious or inauspicious. If it is found to be auspicious the date of marriage is fixed up, the bride with a procession is brought to the groom's house where a hearty feast is arranged. Various kinds of sweets are arranged on a table in the courtyard. The groom bows down before the father touching the ground six times when the father utters, "Go my son, find out a wife with intelligence and prudent thinking." The groom then sends a decorated palanquin to bring the bride. In order to make the departure auspicious a tree full of oranges is brought and

purses are made hung in the tree indicating the couple will have many children and their wealth will be increased. A pair of goose is also kept ready as a token of conjugal affection. The bride being blessed by the betters and taking a cup of wine gets into the palanquin. This being done many people with servants and maid-servants accompany the bridal procession with various flags, umbrellas and dresses. The flags will bear the condition of the wife when her husband will go aboard. They think more of family and self protection than of sexual enjoyment.

Amongst the Santals various peculiar nuptial systems are met with. When a Santal young man falls in love with a marriageable girl, at first he either stretching out his hands in a dancing performance or presenting fruits and flowers to the spouse in an open field, starts talk with her. They also are reported to start to mix with each other through the medium of the wife of elder brother or grand mother. Later on, the leader of the village is informed of this illicit connection, then they convene a meeting and seeks consent of the girl for the marriage. If the girl becomes agreeable to such marriage the youngman put vermilion on the forehead of the spouse.

Sometimes the couple flee away from home to somewhere else where they live a conjugal life. The Kinsmen search them out and beat the youngman severely to teach him a lesson for his misdeed. Afterwards the marriage is socialized by putting a tip of vermilion on the forehead of the bride.

Religion has a great influence on the Tibetans. Many temporary rituals are performed according to religious instructions whereas marriage rituals are freed from religion. As soon as a Tibetan boy becomes young, he goes out in search of a spouse.

It is heard that the young man intending for marriage goes to the tent of the selected bride, riding on a horse. After catching hold of the girl he returns home shouting loudly.

The father of the girl along with other relatives and friends follows them with a noise. After a while the two rival parties get together and befriend to each other. This being done they enjoyed together a feast containing one or two kinds of intoxicated things. Then the bride starts living with the groom. If within three days no disparity occurs, the marriage is settled finally and if occurs the girl goes back to her parents' tent and the temporary marriage thus desolves.

Amongst the Tibetans one girl can marry more than two brothers which is said to be done to keep the family property intact, that is undivisible. This is also done for the purpose of growth of population. A girl can have more than one husbandin order to increase population.

Whenever a man resides in a place outside his own home, there he manages for a wife on temporary basis. He leaves that wife at the time of returning home. The Tibetan Girls prefer to have more than one husband. They, it is reported, feel astonished when they hear of one girl having one husband with the idea that who will take care of the bride in case of absence of her husband.

Forcible marriage by exchanging garlands, is also prevalent amongst the Santals. 'Not to marry' is illegal and disrespectful amongst the Santals After marriage the couple get social recognition as perfect member.

VII

Various peculiar types of marriage as are met with amongst the Santals, are depicted here :

1. Sada Bapla : In this marriage two guardians of both the bride and groom go to each other's house for selection of the wedding couple. Sometimes a go-between settles up the marriage along with other essential formalities. This go-between is called as 'Raibar'. Due to their faith in various superstitions, the Santals observe auspicious and inauspicious things before they start for marriage. At the house of the

bride she is made to be seated on the lap of the groom and the authority of the groom make the presentation of a bone or hansuli to the bride who is ritually made 'Bagdatta'. On the wedding day bride price is to be paid up. The village leader called 'Jagmajhi' accompanies the groom to the bride's house where he is paid two rupees or so as a mark of village respect. This marriage is also termed as "Kiringbahua."

2. Tunki Dipil: Every prenuptial formality is observed as in case of Sada Bapla. But this type of wedding ceremony does not bear the names of the ancestors of the couple. On her arrival at the groom's house the groom strikes the gate of the palanquin with a hand fan, the maid-servants of the bride opens the door. The bride comes out of the palanquin by covering his face with a veil and rides on the back of a maid-servant. The two shoes of the groom are kept on the two sides of a fire. Another maid-servant keeps up on the head of the bride a plate containing rice and betel leaves etc. The groom sitting on a high chair accepts the bride who has to bow down by touching the feet of her husband. The couple have to offer puja to the images of their ancestors in the Basarghar (dormitory). Afterwards some more jag-jajna (oblations) is performed. On the third day the married couple go to the bride's house in a procession.

3. Or-Itut: In this marriage both the couple fall in love with each other. The guardian of the groom generally remains agreeable to this marriage but the guardian of the bride manytimes dislikes this type of marriage. Itut means to apply vermilion on the forehead. The groom applies vermilion on the forehead of the bride and snatches her away by her hands. The village Jagmajhi later on, settles up the matter. A great dispute arises with the guardians of the bride when they do not give consent to the marriage. As a result manytimes the people of either the bride's house or village raid the groom's house and beat the would-be groom and so much so sometimes they beat the groom to half death. Later on, the

Jugmajhi settles up the dispute. A feast is held if the groom party offer two good he-goats or pigs This being done the bride's father gets bride price. The village leader of the groom gets five rupees for his protection of the life of the groom.

(4) Ingrabai : If a girl falls in love with a youngman who along with his guardian remains unagreeable to the marriage, the girl then goes to the village Jagmajhi and tells him every thing in detail. The Jagmajhi suggests the girl to go to her lover's house. She does so. At that time the members of the groom family inflict tortures upon her in various ways. Later on, when the marriage is settled all the expenditure of the marriage is borne by the groom party. They have to pay three sharies, two kine and seven rupees. Besides, they are to arrange for a feast too.

(5) Tunkiki Dipil Bupla : This is a very simple type of marriage observed by those who are very poor. No expensive ritual is observed in this marriage system, In the house of the groom vermilion is applied on the forehead of the bride.

(6) Kiring Jaoal : It is a very peculiar type of illicit marriage. It becomes necessary, when an unmarried girl becomes pregnated. to find out a groom to give the future issue a social status and gotra. For this reason it is very difficult to find out a groom. A groom is generally found out to give consent on being paid a good deal of groom-price. Whenever no groom is found available the future child gets the status and gotra of the Jagmajhi.

(7) Ghardijaoal or Grihajamata : In this wedding system the groom has not to pay any bride-price. If he resides in the house of the future father-in-law for a few years the father-in-law gives him suitable presentation and other commodities for living a family life. The bride of this marriage is hardly chosen by others.

(8) Sanga : Marriage with a widow or a lady left by her husband, is called Sanga. For this marriage the groom party has to pay bride price.

VIII

1. Marriage with near blood relations: Now-a-days marriage within near blood relations is hated. But it was not so all along. In the ancient Hindu and Greek mythology there are instances regarding marriage between father and daughter, and mother and son. It is said that Egyptian god Aman had married his mother, Scandenavian god Odin married his daughter Friga, the Roman god Jupiter married his sister Juno. Besides mythological examples there are historical instances regarding kin-marriage. In the countries of Switzerland, Athense, Egypt, Persia, Sirya etc. marriage between mother and son, father and daughter, brother and sister was met with. The Pharoah kings of Egypt married sisters and step-sisters. The kings of Ptolemy dynasty of Egypt followed them. During Roman era marriage between brother and sister took place in order to avoid division of land amongst the cultivating landlords.

Ebrahim married his step sister. Excepting Spain and Russia in all other countries of Europe and amongst the Muslims marriage, excepting own brothers and sisters, within other types of cousin brothers and sisters takes place. In the Oeda community of Ceylone marriage between the ownbrother and sister is thought to be a very pious deed. Of course, the half civilized people of Australia follow a very strict principle. There the people of one community marry the people of other community Amongst the civilized nations the Hindus specially of Bengal do not prefer marriage within the same Gotras. They are exogamous. Marriage within the blood relations leads to irreglarity in relationship and creates a hindrance towards increase of relations. On the other hand there are many half civilized and civilized communities who prefer marriage within their own communities. The weavers of Santipur in West Bengal and Kayasthas of Dacca in Bengladesh etc. observe this system which is called endogamy.

By marriage amongst the blood relations no harm was done

to the Ptolemy dynasty. Since the Ptolemy III for two hundred years they indulged in marriages between the brothers and sisters. The famous queen Cleopetra of Egypt was the issue born out of the marriage between brothers and sisters.

During the Vedic era there had been the practice of endogamy to a large number. Then 'Sagotra', 'Sapinda' 'Sakulya', and 'Sabandhab' marriages were not in force.

During the Buddhist era in India there were many instances of marriage between brothers and sisters. It appears from the Buddhist scripture Mahabangsha that Sihabahu, the king of Lad, married his own sister Sihashi Bili.

It appears from the description regarding creation of Sakya dynasty that the king Ongkar had four sons and five daughters. Excepting the eldest sister the four brothers married the four sisters and lived in the city of Kapilabastu. As they were Samartha or Sakya (able) to indulge in marriage between brothers and sisters, their dynasty was named as 'Sakyabangsha.'

Though Manu prescribed Sabarna and Sagotra marriage, the influencial people, in many cases were found to break this law. Even after Manu's prescription there are many examples regarding exogamy, hypergamy and hypogamy.

Dr. Westermark does not admit that marriage between cousin brothers and sisters does any harm to human being. No disparity is met with amongst the children born out of parallel or cross cousins marriage that takes place amongst the Muslims. Even in the 20th century marriage between the maternal uncle and his niece is a popular practice in the South India. It involves a curious rite having some bearing upon it. After Upanayana the Brahmin boy has to feign that he is bent upon renouncing the world and going away to Varanasi with the intention to settle there permanently. On hearing this promise of the brother, his sister is then to come and appeal to him to give up the idea because she will surely give her daughter in marriage with his brother. At

this promise the Brahmacharin will give up his idea of renouncing the world. This is nothing but a popular Indian instance regarding marriage amongst the blood connected relations. Marriage between maternal uncle and niece is permissible only when the bride will be the daughter of the elder sister of the groom. The Kannadiga Brahmins of South India indulge in this popular practice.

The society of the Khasis are matriarchiate in nature. They, in order to protect their property, are learnt to marry the mother-in-law as and when necessary. Kin marriage has now-a-days been an object of aversion to almost all the civilized communities excepting a few such as the Muslim and some South Indian people. This aversion practically has led to introduction of the system of exogamy in the Hindu society on various grounds. Besides a few grounds already depicted, some other grounds regarding origin of exogamy are as (1) Males desire for variety (2) According to Freud, society guards against various complexes or odds such as marriages between father and daughter and mother and son by making rules of exogamy. Mc Lennan opines that female infanticide leads to scarcity of women which ultimately brings forth exogamy. Dr. Wester mark holds that exogamy originated in natural aversion to sexual relation between persons who had been brought up together and such persons being commonly blood relations this instinct finally took the form of an aversion to marriage among near kins. Besides, as marriage with near relatives appears to be injurious to the species the, horror of insect may be regarded as due to the growth of intellectual observation.

Prof. Durkheim holds that exogamy originated in a religious respect for blood of the totemic clan, especially for menstruous blood of women which prevents men from having any sexual relations with them.

Havelock Ellis opines that close familiarity leads to contempt destroying sexual appetite and attractiveness as well.

L. H. Morgan comments that exogamy was introduced to prevent the marriage within blood relations such as brothers and sisters which had, in the preceding state of sexul promiscuty, been common. The view of Morgan was supported by Howitt, Fissons, Spencer and Gillen.

Frazer later on comments that the principles of exogamy is actually a curious resemblance to the principle of scientific breeding.

Inspite of various comments some in favour and some against, kin marriage is not at all outdated in some modern societies. Due to this system sexual relationship develops between the future bride and groom before marriage which ultimately leads to permanent conjugal life. The Veddhas of Ceylon practise kin marriage which need not require to observe any such noticeable rituals Besides, there are two types of kin marriages such as parallel cousin marriage and cross cousin marriage. The former means the marriage between the children of two brothers or two sisters irrespective of the rules of discent which is prevalent amongst the Muslims. Cross cousin marriage is the marriage which takes place between the children of brothers and sisters. It means the marriage between M. B. D (Mother's brother's daughter) and F. S. D (Father's sister's daughter). Many tribal people of India such as the Todas of Nilgiri hills and the Gons of the Central Province, the Garos of Garo hills practise this marriage. The Mikirs of Assam, Vaiphie Kukis, Berhors, Hottentots, Herero of Africa etc. also indulge in this system of marriage.

Cross cousin marriage is again divided into two varities such as symmetrical cross cousin marriage which means the marriage either with the father's sister's daughter or maternal uncles' daughter and asymmetrical cross-cousin-marriage means the marriage with any one of father's sister's daughter or maternal uncle's daughter.

Let us sappose A and a, and b and B are the brothers

and sisters of a patriarchaite family and marriage has taken place between A and b and a and B. Their children are A_1 and a_1 and B_1 and b_1! Now A_1, a_1. B_1, b_1 are together brothers and sisters. If A_1 marries b_1, then A_1 will marry his father's sister's daughter (F. S. D). Again if B_1 marries a_1, then B_1 will virtually marry his mother's brother's daughter (M. B. D).

Excepting Europe everywhere in the world this type of kin marriage is prevalent. The Hottentot or Banku of Africa and people of many regions of North and South Africa practise this system of marriage. Besides, the system of marrying maternal uncle's daughter is very popular amongst the literate Hindus of South India.

Various schools divide in opinion in respect of implementation of cross and parallel cousin marriage. According to Tylor, where there is Moiety or Dual system in any society there the people do not marry within themselves i. e. they are exogamous.

Dr. Rivers observed this system amongst the tribal people of Melanesia and Australia. According to Lin those people indulge in kin marriage, because in those regions group-lady-marriage was in vogue. The elderly people of those societies used to keep most of the marriageable girls under their control for enjoyment.

Later on, according to the matriarchiate system they could give their own sister's sons in marriage with a tender aged girls which system gradually became obsolete and they began to give their own daughters is marriage with the sons of their sisters. Mr. Giford observed that once Miwok of California would marry their wife's sister. Later on they gave that right to their own sons.

According to Soanton the tribal people of British Combodia would practise kin marriage only to save their properties. Likewise the males in the matriarchiate society of Khasis in Assam, marry their mothers-in-law only to protect their

property. Besides, the system of bride-price also has made them to indulge in this practice.

Levirate—It means to marry the widow of the deceased elder brother, which may be called a compulsory widow marriage. In most of the cases the widow marries the younger brother which is called junior Levirate. The Lodhas, the Santals and many tribal people of Orissa indulge in this system of marriage.

The marriage between the elder brother and widow of the younger brother is called senior Levirate. It is hardly met with in this country. But according to Hindu scripture in order to have children the elder brother could marry the widow of the younger brother. The first born issue would succeed in the name of the deceased. This was a Hibrew custom. Besides, in some societies high bride price is paid. After death of the husband wife is kept by the family of her deceased husband. If that widow marries any other person then the brothers of the widow is to refund the bride price. As such, this system of refunding bride price practically leads to Levirate. The Bhumijis of Orissa, Hoes of Seraikella, Bunas of Bengal, Kirgiz Panians and Parayas etc. practise this custom.

Sorrorate is defined as a marital alliance in which several sistér in a family are regarded as the wives of the man who marries the eldest of them. The typical example of Sororate is found in Rock-child of America.

It may be divided into two kinds such as non-restricted Sorrorate which means the marriage of the sisters of the wife during her life time, the other one is called restricted Sorrorate which means marriage with the wife's sisters after her death. After receiving bride-price if the wife dies, the husband should marry the other sisters of the deceased wife. Again, marriage with many sisters at a time is called as Sorrorate polygamy.

Due to kin marriage such as cross and parallel cousin

marriage the relationship, is subject to change such as after marriage with his daughter, maternal uncle becomes later on, father-in-law. Like-wise after marriage with his daughter the paternal uncle becomes father-in-law.

In order to maintain the sanctity of blood it is learnt that the brothers and sisters of Howaian and Inca would marry each other. The Kulins ot Babylon and Egypt marry within their own family to maintain sanctity of blood. Freud called this instinct of man as Oedipus Complex.

VIII

Practice of Sati—Even in the 18th Century the Hindu widow deemed to be burnt alive with the deceased husband in the same cremation ground as a mark of great devotion towards husband as well as immortality of conjugal relationship. This dreadful practice was called Satidaha (Sacrifice of life with the dead husband in the same funeral pyre.) It was of two types such as Sahamaran (to die with the deceased husband) and Anumaran (to die following the death of the husband). Sahamaran meant that a wife had to be burnt wilfully to death in the same funeral pyre of the deceased husband. Anumaran meant to die willingly following the deceased of the husband abroad, with the cloths or any other things used by the deceased husband. This system was not applicable in case of the Brahmins. In case of a pregnanted woman, this dreadful ritual was performed after delivery of issue. If there had more than one wife, a dispute would arise as to who would have the right to be burnt to death with the deceased husband in order to perform Sati. At the time of indulging in Sati it would be thought illegal either to cry or weep. No woman was spared if she being afraid, refused to be Sati. Besides, if any one had once been ready to be burnt to death but later on being afraid wanted to flee, she would be burnt alive forcibly. The great Mughal Emperor, Akbar wanted to

put an end to this cruel practice but in vain. During Lord William Bentinc at the effort of Raja Rammohan Roy etc. the practice of Sati was made to be a legal offence. The Hindus at first created a great hindrence when this law was going to be passed. The practice of Sati was abolished after the Act prohibiting this practice was passed in 1829.

In ancient time if the kings of Abysinia, Babylon and Egypt would die, their queens or maid-servants along with essential commodities for their happy after-life were engraved or cremated with them. Might be that system later on, was introduced amongst the Hindus as the practice of Sati.

X

Widow marriage in the Hindu Society : Iswar Chandra Vidyasagar made some valuable researches and movements for introduction of Hindu widow marriage.

According to Parashar and Narad Samhita a woman can re-marry, (1) if the husband becomes untracable, (2) if the husband wanders as a religious mendicant or becomes a monk (3) if the husband dies, (4) if he is proved impotent i.e., unable to cohabit, (5) if the husband is outcaste for commitment of a great sin.

Again according to Maharshi Katyayan a married girl can be given in marriage for the second time if the person with whom she has been married, is proved to be (1) belonging to other caste (2) outcaste (3) impotent, (4) adulterous and whimsical (5) belonging to the same gotra (6) slave or (7) suffering constantly from disease. Of course, there is no hard and first rule to observe this system.

At present day amongst the Hindus the most common is the dowry marriage.

It will be instructive to examine the legal aspects in respect of widow marriage or marriage of a divorced women. Though according to Hindu law books widow marriage amongst the

high caste Hindus was unthinkable and unbelievable as well. The prohibition has no foundation in early custom whether Aryan or non-Aryan. The marriage of widows has been sanctioned by the Vedas. The remarriage of the widows, deserted wives and wives who have abondoned their husbands for good on sufficient grounds, is sanctioned by the early lawgivers. Manu being the first authority expressly permits the marriage of a virgin widow to her deceased husband's brother. The marriage of widows and under some restrictions of devorcees, is common amongst aboriginal tribes and low caste people all over India, and it has been recognized as legal by the High Courts. As per Hindu Widow Marriage Act XV of 1856, the mariage of widows has been legalized for all castes and at present the question of the judicial recognition of such marriage does not arise at all. Under Hindu law, a widow is entitled to maintenace by the family of her first husband or incertain circumstances, to inheritance of his property. If the marriage is unlawful, it naturally involves the forfeiture of these rights. The Act XV of 1856 though legalizes the marriage of widows, it deprives, on the other hand, too, of all rights and interests in their deceased husband's property after remarriage. It has been established beyond dispute that whenever a court permits the marriage of a widow, as per custums, she shall lose all rights or claims whatsoever on her deceased husband's family. Of course, if she marries her husband's brother this question does not arise. But otherwise the second husband must repay to the family of the first husband the bride prices, if any, paid by the former which is nothing but to purchase the widow from her owners. The case is so complete that the widow must leave her children by the first husband with his family. Of course, in some castes so much of concession is made to humanity that she is allowed to keep a child that is actually at the breast.

On seeing the miserable condition of the widow Iswar

Chandra Vidyasagar did much efforts for implementation of widow marriage.

XI

Amongst the Muslims marriage tie can be dissoluted on the will of either the husband or the wife. Besides, it is felt necessary on the ground of illness, mental disparity, untraceability. Sometimes remarriage after dissolution of marriage is permissible amongst the Muslims. Amongst the wives of Hazrat Muhammad only one was a virgin lady and the rest were either widows or divorced women. Hazrat Mohammad himself has proved by his own dealing that none should disagree to marry either a widow or a divorcee.

The customs which are contrary to morality or public policy will never be enforced by the court which, of course, prevents the recognition of many a widely established usage, such a sillicit connexion with prostitutes and dancing girls, abandonment of a husband by a wife followed by a subsequent remarriage, an agreement to assist a man with money to obtain a wife, a villlage custom that recognises the Gandharva form of marriage etc. and these have all been refused legal recognition.

The Muslims and the Christians were so much generous in allowing their widows to marry for the second time whereas the Hindus at first were very much reluctant to indulge in this practice.

Even today, many civilized people of the world are found to accept more than one wife which gets social recognition among them, whereas the nations which have legal hindrance towards acceptance of more than one wife, they are found to indulge in the intercourse with unmarried women and on the other hand impose the sanctity of Sati on females. This may be called a double standard of morality for men and women. After marriage specially the women have to suffer from the idea of remaining content with particular mates only, whereas

the male can enjoy as many women as they desire. In the modern age there are two contradictory systems for selection of spouses such as love marriage and married love. Half of the population of the world prefer the former system and the rest the latter. The people of Europe, America and Australia prefer love marriage, whereas the pepole of Africa and Asia prefer married love. The pepole of Western country think that marriage without love is invalid, as because in married love the couples may not be happy if they find each of them unsuitable to each other after marriage. Because, before marriage the bride and the groom are not allowed to mix together to examine whether they are fit for each other. And that is why this type of marriage is called legalized prostitution. According to the western thought the system of love marriage is not devoid of any defect as the youngmen and women in their immature stage are found to fall in love with each other and to live an adulterous life before marriage which may ultimately lead to separation and aversion to each other.

In some Eastern countries the introduction of dangerous systems of (1) child marriage (2) maintenance of caste rigidity in selection of spouses (3) hateful greediness for wealth or dowry (4) selection of ugly, drunkard, loose character, sickly, twice or thrice married man for wealth etc. are all injurious to healthy family life. This is done by the parents inspite of marriageable sons and daughters having no consent to the above type of marriage. Belief in palmists of the parents also lead to superstitious selection of couples.

According to western system the marriageable couple have been given full freedom in selection of their spouses. Besides, there are no prejudices like dowry and child marriage.

The Arabic word of marriage is Nikah which originally means 'Aqd' or uniting. Marriage in Islam, is a sacred contract which every Muslim must enter into, unless there is

special reasons why he should not. In the Holy Quran it is said "And marry those among you who are single and those who are fit among your male and female slaves; if they are needy, Allah will make them free from want out of His grace. The Hadith also lays stress upon living in a married state. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said to certain people who talked of fasting in the daytime and keeping awake during the night, praying to God and keeping away from marriage; "I keep a fast and I break it and I pray and I sleep and I am married, so, whoever inclines to any other way than my Sunna, he is not of me",

Celibacy (Tabattul) was expressly forbidden by the Hily Prophet. According to one Hadith "The man who marries perfects half his religion" Another says, "Matrimonial alliances increase friendship more than anything else"

The natural inclination of the male to the female and of the female to the male finds expansion through marriage and is developed first into a love for the children, then a love for one's kith and kin and ultimately into a love for the whole of of humanity.

The Europeans are doubtlessly bent on more and more on "free love" in the place of marriage. But 'free love' will certainly bring ruin to the European civilization. Marriage on the other hand strengthens the ties of the natural love of the two mates, but it also requires them to share each other's cares and sorrows, for human life has its cares and sorrows as well as its pleasures, whereas 'free love' makes each of the mates selfish in the extreme, as because, while the male and female become each other's partners in happiness, each is free to love the other uncared for in his or her sorrow. Marriage again makes the two mates jointy responsible for the welfare of the children, but in 'free love', no such question arises at all.

A marriage for a fixed period was recognised before Islam. It went under the name of Muta meaning profiting by or enjoying a thing. Besides temporary marriage, four kinds of union

of men and women were recognized by the pre-Islamic Arabs. The first of this was the permanent marriage tie which in a modified form, was recognized by Islam. In the second system, man would say to his wife, send for such a one and have cohabitation with him ; and the husband would remain during that time, aloof from her and would not touch her until her pregnancy would be clear. This is exactly the form which goes under the name of 'Neyoga' in the reformed Hindu sect, Arya Samaj. The third, for that, less than ten men would gather together and cohabit with a woman, when she became pregnanted and gave birth to a child, the woman then would call all the men and declare that the child would belong to such a one who was bound by her word to accept the responsibility. This practice is now found amongst the Todas of Nilgiri in India and it is similar to group marriage i. e, marriage to a woman with several men as was met with in case of the Pandavas of the Mahabharata. According to the fourth system when the prostitutes were entered upon promiscuously and one of them bore a child, a man known as qa'if (let one who recognised) was invited and his decision based on similarity of features was final as to who was the father of the child. The last three forms were nothing but legalized adultery in one form or another and Islam did at any time, recognise any such practice.

Recently the idea of temporary marriage by way of experiment is a remedy for the rigidity of the Christian marriage laws. Islam. however, discarded the idea of temporariness in marriage, because it opens the way to loose relations of the sexes, and entails no responsibility of any kind on the father for the care and bringing up of the children who with the mother, might thus be left as quite destitutes. Dissolution of permanent marriage is adoptation to divorce and not recognition of temporary marriage. On introduction of temporariness in marriage it will loose its whole sanctity and all responsibilities. According to the

Holy Quran, the union of the two sexes is lawful because of their acceptance of responsibilities which does not mean temporary marriage.

XII

As to birth control—the entrance into matrimonial relationship by a man and a woman is undertaken with only one end in view, viz. the multiplication of the human race. Birth control is, therefore, notning but a check to the very object of marriage for which the serious significance of married life, the care and bringing up of children, as the ultimate object of sexual pleasures, has lost its importance and the enjoyment of sexual pleasures is becoming an end in itself. The Holy Quran has referred to this subject in two places, and on both occasions it speaks of birth control as the actual killing of children !. 'And do not slay your children for fear of poverty ; we give them sustenance and yourselves too', Whereas birth has been controlled and are being controlled by both the Hindus and the Christians with the help of many modern scientific devices.

XIII

Women are not forbidden to take part in any activity when necessary, nor is there any injunction in the Holy Quran or the Hadith shutting them up within the four walls of their houses. Besides, according to the Holy Book of Muslim Society men and women have been given the right to meet each other. Muslim women are commanded to veil themselves when they have to go out for their needs. These needs may be either religious or secular. The Muslim women need not wear veil in the performance of pilgrimages and public prayer. If it had been necessary, injunction would have been issued to wear them on these two sacred occasions, since these are the occasion on which men's sentiment should be

purest. But it was a recognized practice that women may come to mosque unveiled.

Concubinage is a regular sexual connection with a female who does not hold legal status of a wife. It is nothing but keeping a woman in the position of a wife without marrying her. There is a general impression that Islam gives an unlimited licence to have as many concubines as one likes so long as the concubine is a slave or a prisoner of war and not a free woman. Concubinage was undoubtedly practised in Arabia before Islam and it may have been practised by some Arabs until the revelation of verse. Later on it was put to an end by the Quranic injunction.

XIV

Amongst the Muslims the system of divorce is very easy. If a husband in presence of a proper witness, utters thrice the words as 'I divorced you", the wife will be divorced. Of course, in order to avoid future dispute if any, divorce is registered by a Kazi (Marriage Registrar). The wife has no right to divorce her husband.

The divorce amongst the Santals is based on some grounds. If the wife becomes a traitor or a witch, she can be divorced for which both the couple have to tear a Sal leaf and overturn a pitcher of water. If a man leaves her wife without any ground, he does not get back the bride-price paid by him. The children in these cases live with the father. Only the infant if any, is brought by the mother for which he gets money from his former husband. If the wife is found guilty of divorce, the husband can demand the money paid by him at the time of marriage. After death of the elder brother, the widow is married with the younger brother.

Amongst the Japanese and the Chinese divorce is operated on various grounds such as bareness, Asatitwa (promiscuty) indifference towards father-in-law and mother-in-law, too much talkativeness, use of rough words, misbehaviour towards

husband, old disease etc. Yet divorce is hardly met with in these two countries.

The system of of divorce is not at all in force amongst the Roman Catholic. But there is a system to live separately. Amongst the Protestants of Europe and America, due to prevalence of the system of divorce on the grounds of illicit connection of wife with other males and domestic dispute between the husband and wife, many times mutual collusion brings about false Byavichar (promiscuty) to dissolute the marriage tie.

The other grounds on which, amongst the Protestants, the Court issues at first Decree Nisi for separation of marriage tie for six months and later on Decree absolute, are as (i) desertion i.e. to live separately and not to bear the maintenance of the wife, (ii) cruelty on physique and mind, (iii) uncurable madness and (iv) homosexuality.

Dissolution of marriage—it takes place if the marriage is not done according to law and if on some serious grounds the relationship between the husband and wife is cut up. The marriage thus being dissoluted the couple can marry for the second time.

The marriage amongst the Christian may be dissoluted or declared null and void, (1) if the wife immediately after marriage is proved to have been pregnanted by the person other than husband, (2) if the married couple are proved. minor, (3) if consanguinity is proved, (4) if either husband or wife of the previous marriage is found living, (5) if any one of the couple has no capacity of cohabitation, (6) if it is proved on reasonable ground that any one of the couple has expired, (7) if certain nuptial rituals are not observed, (8) if any one of the couple willingly refused to cohabit, (9) if any one is found insane at the time of marriage, (10) if any one of the couple is proved to have been suffering from gonorrhoea, (11) if it is proved that one had not consent to marriage due to madness, fraud, forcibility and wrong attempt, (12) if

any one of the couple is found to suffer from Hysteria or madness etc.

Judicial separation—under these legal arrangements, the husbands and wife may, if they so desire, be permitted by the Court to live separately. At this conjugal connection is disturbed, but the husband has to bear the maintenance of the wife..

A Christian wife can have judicial separation from her husband (1) if the later regularly beats his wife and children, (2) if he lives a corrupt life, (3) if he leaves his wife, (4) if he willingly does not maintain his wife, (5) if the husband lives separately and (6) if he becomes an excessive drunkard. Likewise a Christian husband can have judicial separation from his wife, (1) if she shows constant cruelty towards the children, (2) if she lives an illicit life and becomes an excessive drunkard.

According to Hindu Smriti the marriage tie not only lasts for the whole life, it lasts even after death. Being prejudiced by this idea a Hindu wife even after the expiry of her husband did not marry for the second time. But a widower had no restriction to repeat marriage.

According to the Hindu marriage Act passed in 1954 both the married couple can appeal to the Court for either judicial separation or dissolution of the marriage after three consecutive years have elapsed, (1) if any one of the couple lives an adulterous life, (2) if one has been converted to other religion, (3) if any one is proved to have had been mad since three years earlier to marriage, (4) if anyone is proved to have been suffering from leprosy or gonorrhoea, (5) if anyone leaves home for joining a religious organisation, (6) if it is proved that one is not heard to have remained alive for seven years.

(7) if the couple do not cohabit for atleast two years even after the Court has accepted the appeal for separation and (8) if the couple do not abide by the instruction issued

by the Court towards re-establishment of conjugal relationship. The wife can appeal for separation of marriage (1) if the husband is proved to have had married another woman before his marriage with the petitioner, (2) if the husband is proved to have raped another woman and indulged in homosexulogy and cohabited with a beast. Besides, judicial separation can be operated on mutual consent for the same.

According to Islamic law marriage is nothing but a civil contract, yet some rights and responsibilities have been imposed upon it, keeping an eye to the welfare of the humanity as a whole and high degree of sanctity has been attached to it. Islam recognizes the necessity, in exceptional circumstanoes, of keeping the way open for its dessolution. Though the Hindus at first were against breaking marriage tie, but in the modern age the necessity of divorce has, on various grounds already depicted, been recognized by them. According to the Jewish law the right of divorce belongs to a husband who can exercise it at his will. According to Christian law the right of divorce is recognized only when there is faithlessness on the part of either of the parties, but the divorced parties are precluded from marrying again. Açcording to Hindu law persisting before passing of Hindu code bill in 1956, marriage once performed could never be dessolved. Islam effected several reforms in respect of divorce. It restricted the husband's right to divorce while recognizing the wife's right to it.

The Arabic word for divorce is Talaq which has a literal significance of freeing or undoing of a knot. In the terminology of the jurists the Talaq is called a Khul (meaning literally the putting off or taking off a thing) when it is claimed by the wife. From both the Holy Quran and the Hadith it is revealed that, though divorce was permitted, yet the right of divorce could be exercised only under some restrictions. The Holy Prophet is reported to have said, "Never did Allah allow anything more hateful to Him than

divorce.* So in case of divorce not only there should be a good cause for divorce but all the efforts for reconciliation must be exhausted before divorce is resorted to. As such, the impression that a Muslim husband may put away his wife at his mere caprice, is a grave distortion of the Islamic institution of divorce. As Islam is a universal religion having various types of nation under its sway, so no rigid principle for the people of the lowest grade of civilization as well as those at the top could not be limited.

According to Islam the two sexes are placed on a level of perfect equality. A breach between the two would imply that either the husband or the wife wants to break off the marriage agreement, and hence either of them may claim divorce when the parties can no longer pull on in agreement. In case of effecting divorce both the husband and the wife will be treated equally. A judge has to be appointed from his people and another from her people. The two are told to try to remove the differences and reconcile the parties to each other. If agreement cannot be brought about, a divorce will follow.

The menstrual discharge is looked upon as pollution in many religions and the woman who has her monthly courses on is segregated as amongst the Hindus and the Jews. When the courses are on, sexual intercourse is prohibited as it is said to be harmful. In the Holy Quran the subject of menstruation is thought to be as preliminary of divorce. Divorce is prohibited when the menstrual discharge is on and it is permitted only when the woman is in the state of Tuhr (when the woman is clear from the menstrual discharge). Divorce may be revocable as the husband has a better right to take his wife back in the meanwhile if they wish for reconciliation. Every divorce is thus an experimental temporary separation as during the initial stages, the parties live together and every effort is made to re-establish conjugal relationship. Remarriage of the divorced party is encouraged.

The revocable divorce Talaq (Raji) in the terminology of the jurist, can be pronounced twice. After the first divorce, the concerning parties have the right to reassert their conjugal relationship within the period of waiting, and to remarry after the waiting period is over. A similar right is given to them after second divorce but no after third. Before Islam married woman had no right to divorce but the husband had an unchecked licence to divorce his wife. A man would some-times pronounce divorce thrice on one and the same occasion and this would be understood as meaning that divorce had been given.

Divorce in Islam, may be given orally or in writing but it must take place in the presence of witness.

Divorce is looked upon as a necessity in nuptial relation-ship under varying human condition, irrespective of moral turpitude on the part of husband or wife. The Holy Quran takes the most charitable view regarding the necessity for divorce and therefore recommends as much kindness towards women in the case of divorce, as in that of marriage.

Nevertheless, the system of Talaq (unlawful relinquishment of women) amongst the Muslim commanders, was very much onesided. The male can off and on, according to their sweet will, enjoy the right of 'Talaq' without any sanction of the law of Court and verification of reasons. Amongst the Muslims if the husband, in presence of a proper witness says thrice to her wife "Ami Tomay Talak Dilam (I left you), the matrimonial connection will be nullified. Of course, to avoid future disputes at present some are found to get this Talaq registered by a Kazi (Marriage Registrar). The wife has no right, according to Islamic rule, to leave her husband.

Some authentic modern views in regard to Talak (divorce) are Quoted here. S. O. Khudha Bakhsh declares that in East Bengal (Now Bangladash) divorce is the order of the day and wives are put away as one cast off one's old clothes. No judicial enquiry, no concrete proof, not a little evidence of any sort is

needed in this respect. Dr. Iqbal on this aspect asserts that the only way in which a married female folk can get rid of being a scape goat of a merciless husband, is to become an apostate. A Muslim Magistrate friend of Dr. Iqbal opines, in regard to the demerit of the Muslim divorce system, that the defect of the prevalent code of civil laws lies in the provisions for Khul which has not been kept up. According to him, there should have been imposed proper restrictions such as (Mahr) dowry to be given to the woman or vice versa, responsibility to maintain a pregnant divorced wife along with the issue, recognition of right of the issue to inherit property. If it would have been enforced, the number of divorces amongst them would come down very low.

XV

According to Khuda Baksh the view that with all our reverance and emotion to our religion, we do not believe that the moral and other laws are to be learned by experience and observation, but solely by the study of the Quran and the practice of the Prophet should be utterly unsupported by Muslim religion and it is wholly an unfounded doctrine, without any religious basis or sanction for it.

Khuda Baksh also pleads for full freedom of thought and for a modern interpretation of the Quran as a source of impetus and as a devotional manual.

Much of the Muslim conservatism is due to the fanatic Mullas who continue, even in the modern age, to exert a very powerful influence specially on the illiterate masses. But inspite of enormous handicaps the Muslim women to overcome, yet many are increasingly entering the different fields of activities such as legal profession, medical practice, authorship, journalism, teaching, social and political works, midwifery etc.

Afterall one of the greatest achievements of Pakistan (present Pakistan and Bangladesh) has been the step taken for

the gradual emancipation of the female folk who are no longer indiscreminately kept behind the purdah as a mark of fanatic respectibility. The main credit for the gradual emancipation of the women and the emerging out of seclusion, goes to Begam Liaqut Ali Khan, the widow of the first Prime Minister of Pakistan, who attained her desired achievements in this respect, being supported bravely and devotedly by the other Muslim women of Pakistan. Though the move for the abolition of purdah was universally launched, yet some fanatic Mullas opposed to it and took any step to register protest against the growing emancipation of the Muslim womenhood. However, even in the teeth of strong opposition, the Muslim women are coming more and more to share the life and activities of their counterparts. As such, purdah-day is slowly but steadily passing away.

Shaista Suhrawardy Ikramullah, a brave and outspoken protagonist of the reform movement against the marked increase in second marriages during recent years, represents the case to form a reform in the matter. He declares, 'There has been a defiinite increase in the number of second marriage amongst the Mualim Community by ignoring completely the rights of first wife. Almost in all cases there were several children by the first marriage, whose future was doomed by the gross selfishness of their fathers who were highly placed and nobody could raise voice against their misdeeds.

In many cases prominent society ladies were second wives. If strict measures are not taken to prevent this growing social evil, it will surely destroy the whole fabric of Muslim society. The practice of polygamy going too far, has done untold harm and is continuing to cause unspeakable sufferings to a good many women. So the Muslim some how, should seek to amend the existing divorce laws, so that it may not be easy for men to leave their wives off and on.

It is also an interesting point to note that the banning of polygamy in Pakistan was on the agenda of the status of

women conference held in Karachi on 22nd February, 1955 under the auspices of the All Pakistan Women's Association in which a quite contradictory remark was made by one delegate who pointed out that women having outnumbered men in some places it was not undesirable that a certain percentage of able bodied men should have more wives with a view to keeping society healthy. So there was a real problem to prevent the abusive permission to marry more than one wife. As Muslim women were giving serious consideration to some of these vital domestic problems, some forward looking proposals were also made at the conference. The proposals are as follows : —

"That the dessolution of marriages should take place through Courts of law ; and that the permission of the court should be made necessarry for a man seeking to have more than one wife.

The women of the conference are getting momentum inspite of opposition of the orthodox leaders i. e. the fanatic Mollas who were criticised by the women for their narrow interpretation of the Quran. The Govt. of Pakistan responded to the proposal of the conference and appointed a committee of four men and three women to consider the grievances of the Muslim women and find out means to better the situation. The commission on Marriage and Family Laws without whiling away time, prepared and issued some searching questionnaire for consideration by the public. The ultimate result of this social and religious movement was led to passing a Marriage Act prohibiting Polygamy in Pakistan. Without any prejudice to the modern outlook of the Quranic Law, whereas in India though the Hindus are prohibited from polygamy by a special Marriage Act which is not applicable in case of the Muslim and the Christian. Many people think this policy to be an utterly discriminating one for the citizens of the same country.

Begam Liaquat Ali Khan actually championed the cause of

of gradual emancipation of Muslim womenhood.

The rise of forein Christian power led to the total collapse of Muslim rule in India resulting in a great resentment among the Indian Muslims who ultimately indulged in strong reactionary movement of puritanical Wahabism. The rise of Christian power in India practically threatened to block all progress of and keep the Muslim community locked behind the doors of ignorance and mediavalism. But the Muslim community was at last awakened by the leadership of those who had the prophetic vision of the new day with modern outlook.

The present day development, which play an idealism amongst the Muslims of India specially in the then Pakistan practically was cherished by Sir Sayed Ahmed Khan, who more than three quarters of a century ago had laid the foundation of the Aligarh Muslim University. Sir Syed indeed quite unawarely began the movement which Quaid-e-Azam Muhammad Ali Jinnah also brought to its destined goal in the then Pakistan. So the Muslim communities both in India and Pakistan to-day owe their heartfelt debt of gratitude to that stalwart apostle of reconciliation i. e. Sir Syed Ahmad Khan which the Indo-Pak Muslims will never be able to repay at all.

Ahmed criticized bitterly against the professional Mullahs of Islam who practically should be held responsible for keeping the masses of Muslim in the darkness of unwisdom. Nevertheless, they allowed Islam to die of formalities and had never prevented the Islamic division into various sects. He also deplored the popular Muslim saint-worship. He even could not tolerarte Syed Amir Ali and Prof. S. Khuda Baksh who were thought by him, to be rationalizing exploiters of Islam by throwing doubt on the Quran as perfect work of divine revelation in tracing some of the sources of Islam to pre-Islamic Arabia, Judaism and even to Christianity. As such, in regard to social reform, Ahmed, in practice stood staunchly by the conservative groups though not ultra conservativeness. Ahmed refused to acknowledge the Islamic

law of divorce and polygamy. He rejected with disdain. the attempt within Islam to make Muhammad's teaching and practice suitable to present day rituals or customs in the then Christian lands by alternation or adaptation.

It may be concluded that the working khowledge of the caste system and the caste customs is essential to any officer who has to deal with the people of various religions. Amongst some castes marriage between the widow and the elder brother of her husband is strictly tabooed ; what is more, even a conversation between these two fellows is not allowed, but amongst some castes this type of marrlage has got social recognition. Likewise the marriage of a low caste girl with a higher caste Hindu is permissible whereas the same of a higher caste girl with a low caste man is highly objectionable and subject to outoast. As such, unless an officer khows the lines along with the Indian thoughts and principles which guide his actions, he especially if he be an outsider, cannot understand either the thoughts or the practices of the people whom he will have to deal with.

RELIGIO-SOCIAL RITUALS OF THE HINDU MUSLIM AND CHRISTIAN.

The connotation of 'Ritual' is very wide and comprehends many things from performance of religious as well as some ancestral and social traditions to manners and customs connected with confirmed faith in certain conventional gods and goddesses or spirits. Some of these traditions are highly superstitious and have developed from faith in their enormous power of doing good or evil to mankind. These are being observed from time immemorial. Many of these ancestral traditions and customs that were followed hundreds of years ago, are seen being observed even today by a vast majority of people irrespective of caste and creed.

As rituals play an important part in the life of the people all over the world, the behaviour pattern of life of not only an individual, but also of a group, can be well assessed from the prevailing nature of rituals in any society. A man may best be known by the rites he practises. But the nature of rituals varies in different degrees, under different socio-religious situations. Further, this variation can also be pronounced in a group or community professing the same religion, living in different surroundings or other parts of the same country, according to geo-physical background. Nevertheless, it depends mainly on the socio-religious status of a community. As customs hardly die out, so does a man hardly give up his original paternal rituals which have been handed down from generation to generation, even after his conversion from one religion to another. Indeed there are various rituals relating to socio-religious behaviour and practices of the converts from Hindus to Muslims and Christians, which have been referred to in the selected areas of West Bengal. The social rituals cover the whole span of life, from the cradle to the grave. A man, whether orthodox or liberal in his life, was seen to profess various sets of beliefs, practices and superstitions, which resulted in the origin of various rituals.

The schools of different opinions have given various connotations of the term 'ritual'. In 1920, Willis Cook in his work, "Social Evolution ,of Religion," has stated that ritual makes for morality and morality finds its origin and sanction in the religion. In other words rituals are the guiding factors in human life. Wach Joachim in his "Sociology of Religion" (1931) has described that vital religion must create and sustain a social relationship which can be strengthened through ritualism. As to ritual, it has been stated in the Encyclopaedia of Religion and Ethics" edited by James Hastings (1954) that in the cultural grade the ritualism reflects and sustains social organisation with a moral approach, because morality itself finds its most cogent support in the ritual emphasis." In the "Encyclopaedia of Social Science" edited by Edwin (1955) the term 'ritual' has been postulated as a form of prescribed and elaborated behaviour and occurs both as spontaneous invention of the individuals and as cultural trait magical in nature, and these are ceremonised to infringe upon or appease the Nature to obtain the desired objects. Ritual is not an affair of an individual, it is a collective sentiment.

Rites are basically instructive in nature and found in almost all human societies. These rites generally relate to the phases of (a) birth, (b) puberty, (c) marriage, (d) parentage, (e) eldership and (f) death. Nature has also a close resemblance to the seasons in the arc of man's days. Under its influence, men are found to observe the rites of seed-time and harvest. Rites have their cultural aspects too and ritualism is often modified to reflect and sustain a social organisation. So rites vary in motive, content and quality, according to the time, place and society.

It has been noticed that many similar religious rites and ceremonies as practised by the Hindus, are also in vogue among many converted Muslims and Christians, whose Hindu forefathers used to observe them. Even they were found to observe 'Stri-Achar,' i. e. rituals performed by

the Hindu women during the marriage. Side by side, they observe the Muslim and Christian rites.

Ritual in the strict sence of the term, is not observed now in many communities. After the Vedic period the antiquated ceremonies lost their general mass appeal and during the run of centuries, many of them had been transformed into purely idolatrous demonstrations, which gave birth to an increase in external practices of religious rites. It is generally noticed that to fashion the idol of god, to instal it in the sanctuary, to treat it as animated, to anoint it, are now treated as major religious rites. Worship of divinities is the main core of Hindu religion. This rite involves welcoming of gods, including bathing, dressing, adoring, applying sandal-paste, feeding, putting flowers around them and then worshipping them with lighted lamps held aloft, accompanied by music and song, which are its essential features.

SOCIO-RELIGIOUS RITUALS OF THE HINDUS

Religious rituals :

The proverb goes that the Hindus observe "Baro Mase Tero Parban" (Thirteen religious festivals in twelve months in a year). There are a very few days in a year on which no festival is observed by a Hindu family, whereas the Muslims and the Christians observe a very few festivals throughout the year. Every religious festival observed by the various sections of the Hindus, has got some socio-religious grounds behind. Of course, some festivals are very primitive, formulated on some primitive idea of superstition, and tribal in nature, such as, ritual of sacrifice of a human body on the cultivable land with the expectation that the land will yield much crop. Likewise is the sacrifice of a human body on account of 'Charak Puja' on the day of Chaitra Sankranti, when in order to enjoy fun a man is made heavily drunk and pierced with iron nails in hands and feet, and then made to revolve being suspended from a wooden bar. By this, sometimes the man dies ultimately. Besides, ceremonial sacrifice of

a new-born baby in the sea with a view to satisfying the Goddess Ganga, in fulfilment of the vow by a barren woman, for removal of barenness, is a very typical ritual. Here below are mentioned number of festivals observed by the Hindus throughout the year.

In the month of Baisakh, (i. e. April and May), the first day of the month is observed as the 'New Year's day, when the ceremony like 'Nababarsher Halkhata', (replacement of old account book by new ones) is observed, specially by the businessmen. The Hindus generally want to pass this day by merry-making and taking best food, with the idea that if they can pass this day happily, they will be able to pass the whole year with joy and least disturbance. The unmarried girls worship the 'Sivalinga' (Phallic symbol of Siva) made of clay brought from the Ganges, with the expectation that they will be able to lead a peaceful and happy life, with husband like Rama, and brother-in-law like Lakshmana, and son and daughters like, Kartik, Lakshmi and Sarwasati, etc. Besides, Punyapukur, Dudhaputtalika and Gokal Brata etc. festivals are observed with joy in this month.

On account of 'Gokal' Brata' the unmarried girls throughout the month, spray water to the land to keep the grass living in the dry month of Baisakh and every morning they besmear the forehead and hoofs of the cow with vermilion and oil, and feed them bundles of grass. This festival is a very ideal picture of west Bengal, where cultivation is the main profession of the majority, Besides, the elderly people observe Ramnabami and Akshayay Tritiya, when some donation is made with Samjam (restriction) and respect.

In the month of Jyaisthya (May and June), the festivals like the worship of Mangalchandi on Tuesday, Amrotsab, (Mangofestival) Aswattha Narayan Puja, etc. are observed with some religious background. Sabitri Brata is observed on the Krishna Chaturdashi of this

month by some rich women. Besides, the ritual like Jamaisasthi is observed when the bridegrooms are invited by the parents of the brides, and given a feast with presentation of new cloth, and blessings for a long and happy life.

In the month of Ashara (June aud July), on and from 7th to llth day of this month, the ritual Ambubachi is observed, when the widowed women do not touch fire and take restricted food, and the cultivators stop ploughing and digging, with the idea that this period is the menstrtation period of the Mother Earth when there occurs the possibility of heavy and uncessant downpour, with the sign of yielding rich crops. After this period, the cultivators plough and dig their lands and start sowing seeds again. This ritual has a great significance and a resemblance with the human life. When a girl attains maturity and menstruation begins, a menstrual rite is observed. This rite is observed in various peculiar ways in various, countries. In some countries, during this period, the girl is kept confined within doors and not allowed to see the face of a man.

Menstrual blood is also dreaded in the Mosaic Law Book of the Holy Bible, as well as, in the Quoran (Quoran ii 122; 228). It is generally believed that the rites which mark the end of childhood and entrance into manhood or womanhood, are called the rites of puberty. Such an entry into the adult group is associated with some customs or performances of certain rituals.

There is a peculiar feature of puberty rituals, in which a surgical operation or amputation of some part of the body is done, when penetration of the hymen, circumcision or subincision, knocking out of tooth, amputating a finger, cutting the hair, etc. are performed. Hewever, it is seen that the transition from one grade of life to the next is effected by the rites of initiation. In other words, it represents a totemic cycle of birth and death.

The first menstrual observations are most invariablay and

strictly observed among all rites of primitive humanity. Throughout the world, not only the savages, but also the people of higher cultural groups, observe more or less, in the similar way, the first menstrual rites. Hindu law enjoins as a rule, that a girl shall be married before she attains puberty. Among the Nayers, defloration had to take place before puberty, so that the girl may not be deflowered by the regular operation of nature. All these factors together led to female circumcision.

The Hindu Law Books hold that menstruating woman must be dreaded (Manu, iv, 40-42; Apastampa vii; Vishnu xxii, 71-72; xxxvi 7; Lxxxi 6; Para Sara vii, 13-20; Dalavya 146-54; Brihat Para Sara vii, 226-236, Laghuyam 12:17; etc.)

A woman during menstrual period must not touch any man or woman belonging to any class; she must not touch any type of animal nor even she should touch another menstruating woman (Atri, 271-80; Yama 54-62) On the first day of her course, she must be treated as a Chandali, on the second day, as a Brahmaghatini, and on the third day, as a Rajak (Angiras 33-39; Apastamba vii, 4; Para Sara vii, 19). She remains impure for three days. She must not use 'Anjana' (lambblack) in her eyes, dip in water, lie on the ground, sleep in day-time, touch the fire, clean the rope, brush her teeth, see the heavenly bodies, use utensils of copper, brass and steel during her menstrual course (Vasistha i, 35). She has nothing to do with the funeral ceremony, her very presence being undesirable on that spot (Brihad-jama V, 7-10). She is like an untouchable Chandal. If anyone takes water from a menstruating woman or talks with her, he has to perform the Chandrayana (atonement) Rite in order to purify himself. When a menstruating woman dies, her body should not be burnt, it is to be preserved for three days (Atri Smriti, v, 49-66).

If a woman menstruates at the time of her husband's

death, she is to be burnt alive (Briddha Larita, viii, 203).

The Puranas also attach great importance to the menstrual flow of the women and hold that their monthly periods must not be misused (Vishma iii, 8; Garuda Parva xcv 20).

According to the Brahmanical law books like Griyasutras and the Smritis, as well as, in the Puranas, menstrual blood is much dreaded and menstruating women are regarded as impure, unworthy of having any place in the social activities. But in the Tantras, menstrual blood is regarded as sacred.

The same preconditions which fertilise women, are also thought to fertilise Mother Earth. For example, in Bengal it is believed that with first fall of the rain, Mother Earth menstruates, in order to prepare herself for her fertilising work. A stone is set upon the ground, the top of which is smeared with vermilion, as a mark of menstrual blood of the goddess. During this menstrual period, there is an entire cessation of all ploughing, sowing and other farmwork (Gait. G—1. 3. 1601, L, 189). In many marriage ceremonies, the bride's forehead is painted red, a sign that she is forbidden to all men, save her husband and a guarantee that she will bear him children. After all, red is renewal of life.

During this period of Ambubachi, the widowed women specially of upper classes do not touch fire and cook for themselves. The Snan-jatra and Ratha-jatra (Car Festival) ceremonies are observed in the month of Ashara. The Dasahara Festival is observed in this month when worship of Goddess Ganga, along with a holy-dip in the Ganges are observed. Besides, in West Bengal on this day the worship of Goddess Manasa is performed, which at some places is called 'Bishahari'. The Bengali Hindus think that by taking a dip on this day in the Ganges, one can get rid of ten types of sins.

Manasa, who was first worshipped by the non-Aryans, mainly by cowherds, farmers and fishermen, gradually gained popularity among the womenfolk of the upper classes, and then among their menfolk, including the Brahmins. Worship of this goddess is not confined to the Hindus alone. She is also

worshipped by the Bengali Muslims, the origin of which custom can be traced back to the 15th Century A.D. Even tobay, some Muslims of West Bengal directly or indirectly, take part in Manasa worship.

The immersion ceremony of earthen images of Manasa or of pots, is followed by a boat race in many districts of East Bengal and Syhlet, when images of Manasa are placed on the prows of racing-boats. Every year, during the rainy season, when abundance of snakes causes terror, songs in honour of the Goddess of Snakes are sung with great fervour in all parts of the Gangetic plain.

Arandharna (non-cooking) ceremony is observed throughout Bengal on the occasion of Manasa worship, on the last day of Bhadra. Sometimes, it is observed on the last day of Aswin, or on some other days. It is so-called, as on this day, all cooking is prohibited.

It is also reported that when the Arandhana ceremony is observed on any Tuesday or Saturday in the month of Bhadra, that is known as Ichha-Ranna, I.C coocking according to one's will and Charchar-Puja in some places of Hooghly and Howrah districts, respectively.

In the month of Sravana (July and August), ceremonial sowing of paddy seeds, ploughing, etc. are observed. In this month too, in order to get rid of sankes, the worship of Goddess Manasa is performed at some places. Besides, the Bhasan Gan (immersion song) of Manasa, and the chorus about Behula and Lakshindar by the cultivators, are the special features of this festival. Besides, Dhanya Ropan (sowing of paddy seeds) or Halkarsan (ploughing) Ritual is observed in this month. The Jatra Festival is also held in this month, with a view to displaying the life and activities of Sri Krishna.

Bhadra (August and September): In this month, the Arandhan (non-cooking) ritual is observed' which is a special harvest festival. On the day of observation of this ritual, hearth is not ignited and the food cooked on the previous day and prosad (consecrated food) of Goddess Manasa are taken,

constituting the main features of this festival, on the last day of this month. The worship of God Viswakarma is also performed in this month. Now-a-days it is done in almost all the mills and factories which remain closed on this day. Instruments of all types are worshipped during this puja. The special feature of this day is the festival of flying kites in West Bengal, and boat competition by the Hindus and Muslims in East Bengal. In the month of Aswin (September and October), the worship of Gopdess Durga is performed with pomp and splendour, when every Bengalee, irrespective of caste, the rich or the poor, wears clothes and passes the Puja days happily forgetting all worries. Outside Bengal, on the day of immersion ceremony, the Dasherah Festival is observed with pomp and grandeur, when the effigy of Ravana is burnt. Besides Durgapuja, (1) Dhaner Sadh khaoa, (2) Garu-brata. and (3) Banabhojan (picnic) Festivals are some other special features of this month. On the last day of Aswin, the cultivators spray the paste of green turmeric, alongwith vermilion, oil and Kshir' i.e. condensed milk, on the green field. Immediately after the worship of Durga, puja is offered to Goddess Lakshmi (Goddess of Fortune), on the fullmoon day of this month by the domestic Hindu people.

In the month of Kartick (October and November), the Dewali Festival and worship of Goddess Kali take place. The Dewali Festival takes place throughout India. This festival is observed with pomp and grandeur. On the night of Kalipuja, an image of Alakshmi (Goddess of Misfortune), is made of cowdung and her worship is performed with a very bad type of flower like Kalkasunda, and then by beating a broken winnowing-fan, the Gaddess of Misfortune is cast outside the domicile, and the Goddess of Furtune is welcomed and worshipped. This ritual signifies that it is done because so long the houses were without 'paddy, which is a sign of Alakshmi or want. In this month, the fields are filled with golden paddy, which is compared to Lakshmi who is welcomed by removing Alakshmi, in the month of Aswin.

Besides, there is a ritual prevalent among the Hindus to tie up a lamp on a long pole, and fix it up on the roof facing skyward, which is called 'Akash Pradip' or Beacon Light. This light signifies that it will show our dead fore-fathers the path to the heaven.On the last day of Kartik, worship is offered to God Kartik specially by the women without issue, in the expectation of getting a son like Kartik. On the Sukla Nabami of the month of Kartik, Jagadhatri Puja is performed. She is supposed to be a manifestation of Goddess Durga, and her worship is held with much pomp and splendour. Ganesh puja is also held in this month. In the month of Agrahayan (November and December), the 'Nabanna' ritual is observed, when the offering of new rice to the fore-fathers; various gods and goddesses, etc. and relatives is done by domestic people. The converted Christians and some Muslims also observe this 'Nabanna Festival'. The Christians offer the new rice in the name of Jesus Christ in the Church. Besides, Itu or Surja worship is other popular festival of this month. On the last day of the month of Agrahayana, the worship of Itu is held with pomp and grandeur.

In the month of Poush (December and January), the Pousali or Pithe Parban (Cake Festival) is observed in a joyous mood, when cakes and sweetmeat of various kinds are made and offered to near and dear ones. During this month, the cultivators' granaries become full of new paddy, and as a result they become more solvent. Besides, the worship of Mother Lakshmi (Goddess of Fortune) is also held on the last day of this month in the houses of Hindus, specially the cultivators.

On the last day of Poush, i. e. on the Poush Sankranti, a famous fair is held at the confluence of the Ganges and the Bay of Bengal near Fragergunge in the Sundarban area where there is a temple of Kapil Muni (a famous Hindu monk). Lakhs of pilgrims from various parts of India assemble there on the aforesaid day and take a holy-dip in the sea with the intention of being absolved from their sins, committed throughout their past life.

Magh (January and February):In this month, Sree Panchami Brata and worship of Goddess Saraswati are held. Goddess Saraswati is treated as Goddess of Learning. The students with much enthusiasm and devotion offer worship to this goddess. The schools, colleges and offices remain closed on account of this festival. Besides, the 'Maghmandal' festival is also held in West Bengal and East Bengal in this month. Little girls sing sweetly in chorus ; these are songs composed on the virtues of the Sun God. These songs relate to the family life of the Sun God.

In the month of Falgum (February and March), Sibaratri or Siva Chaturdashi festival is held. Besides, Doljatra or Holi Festival is the most attractive festival of this month, in which many people of different religions of India participate with gaiety and merry-making The Holi festival is observed in the south aud west part of India, with much pomp and grandeur. They use Abira (coloured powder) and Safran etc. and spray coloured-water on each other's person with Pichkari (sprayer). In this month Siva Chaturdashi and fasting are also observed by the Hindus.

Chaitra (March and April) is the last month of the Bengali year. This month is deemed as a very auspicious one. Siva Puja Festival is the main attraction of this month. Devotees of God Siva observe a temporary mendicancy during this morth, and on the last day offer puja to Siva on a mass-scale. On the day of Chaitra Sankranti, worship is offered to the Siva with devotion at holy places like, Tarakeswar in West Bengal, and during this festival a grand fair is held there. Besides, the festivals of worship of Charak Tree, Marriage of Siva, Gajan and Jumping on fire or thorns etc. are observed by the monks. The other attractions of this month are offer of worship to Dharam Thakur, Chattudan, Annasamkranti, Ashwatthabrata etc. On the day of Sukla Astami, worship of Annapurna, a particular manifestation of Goddess Durga, is performed. In this worship, Siva, who is thought to reside in the cremation ground, is seen begging alms of rice from Annapurna, who is

thought to feed all living creatures of the universe. These imimages are made beautifully.

Over and above, Goddess Sasthi is worshipped by Bengali Hindu women on the Sukla Sasthi of every month. Besides, on the 6th day after child-birth, Goddess Sasthi is worshipped. During marriage ceremony, Sasthi and Aranya Sasthi festivals are performed, when the bride-groom is invited and new cloth is presented to him by the parents of the bride, along with blessing for his happy and long life.

The popular god Dharam Thakur is worshipped on a large scale by the people specially belonging to Scheduled Caste community who select a priest from their own comunity who offers puja to Dharam Thakur. The annual worship is held on the fullmoon and song on socio-political conditions of the common villagefolks are sung during this festival. The mentions of the Pal and Sena Dynasty in the songs of Dharam Thakur proves that this wroship has been in vogue since the day of the Kings of Sena and Pal Dynasty.

Broad details of some other festivals are given below:-

Rathajatra (Car Festival) and Snan Jatra are two very attractive festivals of Bengal. These are performed in honour of God Jagannath of Orissa. Besides, Radha Govinda Jew is also worshipped mainly by the people who belong to the Subarna Banik Community of Bengal who are mainly Vaishnavas. The festival like Jhulan Jatra of Radhakrishna is an all-India feature. It is performed on the fullmoon day of the month of Sravana. In many places like Santipur in Nadia and Khardah in 24-Parganas district, fairs are held during this festival. The festival of Rashjatra or Rash Purnima, celebrated on the fullmoon day in the month of Kartik, is another prominent festival. A festival on account of the birth-day anniversary of Rama is held on the Sukla Nabami of Baisakh. It is called Ramnabami which is an all-India festival.

Janmastami held in the month of Bhadra on the Krishna

Astami, is an all-India religious ritual in which Krishna is worshipped. Besides, on the birth-day of Radha, Radhastami Festival is held in some places. Hindus offer Puja to Gour Nitai along with Radha-Krishna as are placed on the Tulsi Mancha (raised platform for the basil plant), by most of the Hindu families. Hindus indulge in various types of religious rituals each of which is performed for the betterment of human being, with special motive behind them.

Bhatri Dwitiya or Bhai Phonta is another popular ritual of the Hindus. It is performed on the Dwitiya Tithi of Sukla Paksha (bright fortnight of the moon) of the month of Kartick. In this riturl the sister puts a mark of sandal paste and Kajal (collyrium) mixed together, with the tip of the small finger of her left hand, on the forehead of her brother and blesses him uttering the words-"Bhayer Kapale Dilam Phonta, Jomer Duare Parlo Kanta" i. e. by applying this sandal dot on the forehead of the brother, his life is thought to be made long. This is analogous to the Pauranic fact that Jamuna, the sister of of Jomraj made him immortal by applying a Phonta (dot-mark) on his forehead. Paddy grains, Durbagrass (cynadon dactylon) sandal paste, collyrium etc. are used in this ritual. Besides, after performance of the ritual the brother is offered sweets.

Gobandhan Puja (cow worship) during Gopastami along with some other religious rituals, is performed specially by the Marwaris, and others in general. Establishment of pond, temple, tree planting and Panchabati foundation are done with some other rituals. Donation, holy dip in the Ganges during Lunar and Solar eclipse are also performed by many Hindus. Taking a holy dip in the Ganges on the Baruni festival day in the month of Chaitra, is deemed by the Hindus to be a deed of great virtue. Besides, fasting during Newmoon and Fullmoon day is thought to be good for health, and is observed by many Hindus.

The worship of Sani (Saturn) and Satyanarayan is very popular and common in Bengal. It is performed in the evening of Saturday. Sanipuja is held outside the dwelling room. The

Prasad or Sinni of Sanipuja even is not allowed to be taken inside a room. One should attend this puja even without being invited, otherwise he will be put to danger by the curse of Sani, is the general belief. During the puja of Sani and Satyanarayan Panchali (booklets containing verses) composed in praise of Sani and Satyanarayan, is read before the assembled devotees. Till Mahalays before the Durga Puja, Sraddh ceremonies are held during the newmoon. Almost all the Hindus perform Sraddh and Tarpan in the name of their fore-fathers for five generations upward. Besides, Graha Puja is performed to satisfy the Grahas (planets) for betterment of one's fate, by the Hindus. During a field study, it was observed that on the first day of the month of Baishakh in the village of Talpukur, in Sonarpur Police Station in the dtstrict of 24 Parganas, Gostha puja along with a fair, was performed on communal basis. During this festival, a temporary temple with twigs and branches of trees is made in the fields where clay-images of Radha and Krishna are placed. Little clay-madc toys of cows are also placed therc, as krishna was born in the house of a milkman and was very much fond of cows. Many Hindus participate in this festival. Besides, many Hindus offer puja to the God and Goddess like, Olai chani, or Olabibi, Satyapir, Manik pir, Sat-Bonbibi, Gazipir, Dakhin Roy, Baba Thakur or Panchanan Thakur, Satyanarayan, Bara Thakur etc. in various seasons of the year.

Birth rituals : Since conception till delivery of a child certain rituals like Garvadan, Pungsaban, Simantannayan etc. inspite of their having become obsolete to some extent now, and not being known to a section of the Hindus, were in vogue on a large scale in almost every Hindu family, half a century ago. Yet, during pregnancy, the ritual like panchagarva is performed when the pregnant woman is ritually made to eat a mixture made of cow-urinc, honey, ghee, milk etc. to purify herslf. Besides, the rituals like Panchamrita or Kancha Sadhvakskan, (in the 5th month of pregnancy) Saptamrita (in the 7th month

of pregnancy) and during full pregnancy, paka Sadhvakshan, (in 9th month of pregnancy) are held by the Hindus. During this ritual, a pregnant woman is offered a new cloth and various nutritious food with the idea that after birth, the child will not crave to eat whatever it would find near at hand, as an unfed and greedy child. During the performance of this ritual, married women are invited to dine best food with the pregnant woman.

In this connection, other rituals relating to child-birth as seen, are mentioned here. On the sixth day after child-birth Sutika Sasthi or Setera Puja is performed by the Hindus. The father and the child have to observe fast for the whole day and in the evening, puja is offered to Goddess Sasthi. Sometimes, Purohit (priest) performs this ritual. There is a proverb that on that day, God comes to write the fate of the new-born child. That is why for the whole night a lamp is kept lighted along with a quill-pen and a palm leaf to get the fate of the child written thereon by the fortune-maker, and for this purpose the door of the Sutikagriha (the lying-in room) is kept open. Of course, now-a-days, even in hospitals, some are found to supply all these things. This is nothing but a folk-belief or Stri Achar. On the eighth day of child-birth, the ritual 'Atkouri' is held during which sweets are offered to the relatives and neighbours, in the evening for the betterment of the new-born baby. This is nothing but a folk-ritual, and still is in vogue in many parts of West Bengal among the Hindus and this is generally done by the parents of the married lady. The mother of the new-born leaves the delivery room after 21 days in case of a male child, and 30 days in case of a female child and offers puja to Mother Sasthi, taking the new-born child on her lap, which is also done for the welfare of the new-born baby. On that day a barber is called to pare off the nails of the mother and shave the hair of the child in order to ceremonially terminate the pollution period. The clothes used during the delivery are

given to the washerman and the Dhaima (midwife) who has to cut the umbilical cord, is also given her due remuneration, generally in silver coins, and offered a new piece of cloth and Sidha (offering of food-articles).

The first rice-eating ceremony (Anna Prashan) is held, when the child attains the age between six to eight months. In this ceremony the child is fed with rice by a relation of his mother's side, and a feast is given to near and dear ones including neighbours. The invitees bless the child and offer some presentations. Generally maternal uncles perform the rite of feeding. Cooked rice with some sweets etc. is fed to the child. The child is blessed with paddy grains and Durba grass. Its face is decorated with sandal-paste and eye lids with lamp black. On this day a name is given to the child. Two names are generally thought in mind when two lamps of mustard oil are kept ready and each flame of the lamp is thought against each name, when one of the flames gets brighter, the name thought against it, is given to the child. Names are generally kept after the names of the Hindu gods and goddesses.

A plate consisting of inkpot and pen, soil, paddy and coins, a book etc. are kept ready during the ritual and the child is made to touch any of these articles. If the child touches pen, book or inkpot, it is supposed to be learned in its after life. If touches soil, it is thought to be an owner of land i. e. a landlord. If the child touches a coin, it is thought to be a richman in its after life.

Hatekhari :

When the child attains the age of three years or so it is ritually made to write something on a slate or a stone plate by a priest. Sometimes family priests perform this rite (learning of first lesson) generally during the worship of the goddess of learning which is held in Sripanchami.

Upanayan :

After the rice-eating ceremony, the Upanayan ritual is

performed by the Brahmins and some Kshatriyas (Kulin Kayasthas) of Bengal, when the child attains the age of 11 years or more. During the Upanayan Ceremony the boy is kept indoors and is not allowed to see the face of women. This is nothing but a puberty ritual. After Upanayan the boy is to wear sacred thread. A feast is also given to the invitees and relatives.

Puberty rites :

When the girl attains her first menstruaion, she is kept indoor and prohibited from seeing the face of any male member for three or seven days and during this time she is treated as polluted and is not allowed to touch any one or to take part In any religious performance. After the menstrual cycle has been over the girl is ritually made bathed to purify hereself.

Then comes the marriage ceremony, the details of which are discussed below.

Marriage :

In India a woman is supposed to be born to marry. She has to marry not by her choice, but by the choice of her parents. She is married to a youngman, often a boy, about whose antecedents she is perfectly ignorant ; even whose features she has not seen before the day of marriage. Of course we hear of the Hindu marriage that used to take place by choice. It was called Swayambara. The girl was allowed to choose herself the person whom she would marry. Elaborate account of such marriages are found in Hindu Epics. The Pauranic marriage of Kalidasa and the historical marriage of Prithwiraj may be referred to in this connection as concrete instances.

Among the Hindus all marriage preliminaries are settled by relatives. The women have no part in this deal. They are kept in seclusion. Yet such marriages very rarely turn into unhappy union.

With the emancipation and education of women, the rigidity of seclusion has been broken through at present, and a large number of them are serving in schools, colleges,

offices and other institutions. Now-a-days they are often making love marriage, marrying outside their own caste and making divorce on flimsy grounds which was not allowed earlier in the Hindu society. Besides, it was a punishable offence too.

It is observed that in India, marriage rites include many puberty rites. Marriage is the Vedic Upanayan which is second birth, as it is an entrance to manhood, or initiation of woman, as there is a very close relation between puberty and marriage, between the first menstrual flow and the age of marriage. Many features of marriage rituals are directly adopted from the older puberty rites, and they are, in most of the cases, sexual in nature.

On analysis of the opinion of the scholars like Morgan etc. regarding marriage, it can be easily concluded that mating instinct in course of time, gave rise to marriage institution and various rites and rituals with varied forms gradually got associated with marriage institution of the people of different religious faiths.

Marriage rituals observed by the people of different religions like Hinduism, Islam and Christianity differ from one another due to their varied cultural background.

On a careful analysis it was found that a good number of rites and rituals are closely related to religious and social ideology. However, the solemnisation of marriage according to Vedas and Upanishadas of the Hindus, the Bible of Christians and the Hadis or the Quoran of the Muslims, is of great importance to all Hindus, Muslims and Christians, as it is related to religious concepts.

The Shastric rites and rituals of the Hindu, Muslim and Christian marriages centre round the methods of solemnisation. The marriages are generally related to utterance of incantations from the Holy Vedas in case of the Hindus, from the Holy Quoran in case of the Muslims, and from the Bible in case of the Christians, before the Hindu Brahmin priest, Muslim Ulema and the Christian priest. In course of the ceremony,

as well as utterance of the in cantations, the new wedding couple take vows for the future when many supernatural potentialities are thought to appear or be propitiated. This utterance of the incantations or dictums are generally thought to play a very important role in the mind of the couple who generally seek for their security.

In case of a Hindu marriage, the Shastric marriages are solemnised before the emblem of Vishnu (which is represented as 'Salgram Sila', i.e. a circular stone emblem). At the same time, other gods like, Ganesha who is called as Siddhidata (giver of all material success) and Surya, the source of all life and energy are also prayed to, in course of marriage ceremony, so as to witness the wedding rituals. Besides, in course of marriage, 'Homa' and 'Yajna' or fire sacrifice is also performed before these gods in the name of some stars and heavenly-bodies like the Ravi (the Sun), Som (the Moon), Mangala (the Mars), Budha (the Mercury), Brihaspati (the Jupiter), Sukra (the Venus), Sani (the Saturn), Rahu (the Ascending Node), Ketu (the Descending Node), and the other gods like Indra (the Thunder God), Varuna (the Sea God), and Agni (the Fire God), Fire sacrifice is performed finally with the help of Ghee (clarified butter) with the utterance of Vedic incantations composed of Sanskritic formulae which invest the wedding performance with a religious as well as spiritual texture, and is believed to tighten the marriage tie between the bride and the bridegroom. According to Hindu religious injunction, marriage is indissoluble, inviolable, indivisible and inseparable and it unifies the two souls for a common goal. The Vedic incantations begin with physical purification by taking water from the Holy Ganges-'Om Tad, Vishnu etc.' The worshipping of Agni, Rabi and performances of other rites are followed later on.

In the case of wedding ceremony of the Muslims and the Christians, the Moulvi or Ulema, and the Padre respectively, are found to make the bride and bridegroom take an oath after utterance af some necessary dictums from the Quoran and the

Bible, with a view to unifying the wedding couple. The bridegroom will promise to look after the bride. In ease of Muslim and Christian marriage, inspite of having some spiritual and religious sanctions, there is no Shastric or legal binding, as in case of the Hindus, to whom marriage is indissoluble, inviolable and inseparable. The Muslims and the Christians, on some trivial grounds relating to economic, domestic, illegal activities of both sides of the married couple, can declare their marriage separable, and can divorce. Of course, in case of Hindu marriage, it was strictly indivisible and inseparable till first-half of the 20th Century, but now-a-days marriage tie is not treated so rigidly among the Hindus. Divorce is off and on, found to take place and Registration Marriage is taking place on a large scale among the Hindus, which was not at all practised before the first half of the 20th Century. Now-a-days, the grounds of divorce are found to be very trivial among the Hindu families too.

The central theme of marriage ceremony is nothing but a prayer to Brahman, in case of a Hindu, and promise or taking oath in case of a Muslim or a Christian. In case of Hindu marriage and in most of the Vedic incantations, the bridegroom and the bride are repeatedly wanted together, suggesting that in case a girl is married, there is no scope for dissolution of marriage or marriage for the second time, even if an eventuality arises in future. The 'Sampradan' (giving away of the bride) is performed in front of the stone emblem of Vishnu. Of course, this rigidity of marriage was observed before the second half of the 20th Century, but now-a-days, there is no such rigidity in marriage tie among the Hindus. Now-a-days, a bride can divorce her husband on a very trivial ground and can marry for the second time easily. Likewise, among the Muslims and the Christians, though the bride and the bridegroom take oath or promise to look after each other before the Ulema or Moulvi, or the Padre in the Church, the image of Mother Mary in case of the Catholic,

and Jesus Christ in case of a Protestant, yet there is no rigidity in marriage that the marriage is not dissoluble and separable from the very beginning and the bride will not be able to marry for the second time. According to Hindu Marriage Act, now-a-days a Hindu cannot have more than one wife, whereas they could have a few wives before the passage of Hindu Marrriage Act in 1955. But in case of Muslims a man can marry upto four girls if he can manage to maintion them. There is no hard and fast rule prohibiting a Muslim or a Christian taking more than one wife. Of course, the Christians are generally monogamous. But the Muslims are very polygamous. The particular social, as well as, religious ceremonies relating to marriage among different castes and creeds, gathered momentum, in course of time, and brought about social solidarity through their performances. Of course, in the modern age society has been brought down to economic considerations, than anything else, resulting in gradual loss of the values of the spiritual and religious significance and tolerance.

The different aspects of marriage ceremony may be divided under the heads. (1) social, (2) magical and (3) legal. Without going into details, a very brief discussion will be made under the above heads relating to Hindu marriage, with special reference to the Muslim and Christian marriage where possible and will be found necessary.

Social :

As to social aspect, Hindu marriage is sworn in according to Hindu Marriage Act. The married couple should celebrate the wedding ceremonies properly and in due form (Hindu Marriage Act 1955).

Marriage being a social institution associated with various rites and rituals, it will be understood after going through the verses of Dharma Sashtras.

Grihya Sutra says that every civilised man is expected to marry and run a home for his own. A few ceremonial Samskaras or rites can be traced in the Rig Veda and Atharva Veda. But

marriage ceremonies have developed more than those were prescribed in the above two Vedas.

In ancient times, marriage was regarded as a sacrifice. One who had not entered married life through marriage, was treated as without sacrifice (according to Taittiriya Brahman 11, 2,6). As per version of Taittiriya Brahman 11, 9 4, 7), he who has got no wife is really without sacrifice, One could pay off one's ancestral debt by producing children (Taittiriya Samhita V1, 33, 10, 5).

Importance was laid on the idea of 'Garhastha' by marriage, in the Ashrama Theory of the Upanishad. According to 'Manu' life was divided into four parts, the first part to be passed in the house of Guru (preceptor), the second part in the house with the wife, the third part in the forest, and the fourth part, as a Sannyasi (Monk). The Smritics highly speak of the life of a householder. According to the Smrities, family life is treated to be the best Ashrama, which is the centre of the whole social structure. One who desires for eternal heaven and happiness in this world, should uphold the 'Garhastha Ashrama.'

It will be found that marriage practically brings up social solidarity in the society. It also satisfies the mating instinct of the individuals and establishes relationship with different families. In this way marriage also brings economic stability in the society. This is also applicable in case of the Muslim and Christian society.

Magical :

Hindu marriage rites reflect a good deal of rites which are magical in nature.

From the Atharva Veda it appears that some wedding songs are sung at the marriage ceremonies, which relate to the lasting of love, and these are called 'Strikarmani.' In the mediaeval Bengali literature it has been mentioned that various rites were practised by the womenfolk during marriage and some of these rites yet survive in the modern system of marriage. The rites mentioned below are grouped as magical :

1. Dristipradip :

When a groom comes to the bride's place, a lamp is shown to the bridegroom and then thrown away which indicates to have some magical significance. This is done perhaps to win away evil spirit.

2. On keen study it has been found that the various articles placed on the 'Barandala' or welcoming pot, strictly comprise twenty-one or twenty-four and the number of Dhutra-pradip used to receive the bridegroom at the plantain-grove is generally twenty-one in number and the number of married women participating in the 'Striachar' also comprises three, five or seven or more. All these numbers have got magical significance according to Mughal formulae.

Twenty-one betel-leaves are used in the Hai-amlabata ceremony, indicating a magical significance. The number of ring stones which the bridegroom wears after the Varana is also restricted to fourteen or twenty, leading to a magical siguificence. Further, the rite relating to writing the names of ideal married pairs on the reverse of Patpiri or ceremonial wooden-seat on the wedding-day also, require fourteen or twenty-one names of married pairs, and taking the bride round the bride-groom lying at the centre, is made seven times. All these rites according to their number signify magical spirit. In the Muslim and Christian marriages some rites relating to magical significance are found to be observed also.

Legal :

On careful studies it was found that there are three original sources of Hindu Law, which have been handed down to the posterity.

These sources are as follows :—

(1) Sruti—It was originally unwritten, simply it is heard and passed from generation to generation orally.

(2) Smriti—It was literally remembered.

(3) Custom—It is Brihaspati.

Hindu law was principally constituted on the basis of the marriage version laid down in Smriti. Dharmashastra, the

guide book of the the Hindu marriage law practically consists of both the Smriti and Sruti. Manu, Yajnavalkya and Narada are the three principal Smrities which were recreated in course of time.

Besides, certain aspects of the Hindu Marriage Law have been treated by Apastamba. Manu has further expounded the subject. Likewise, many other Smritikaras and commentators have also expounded the various aspects of marriage law.

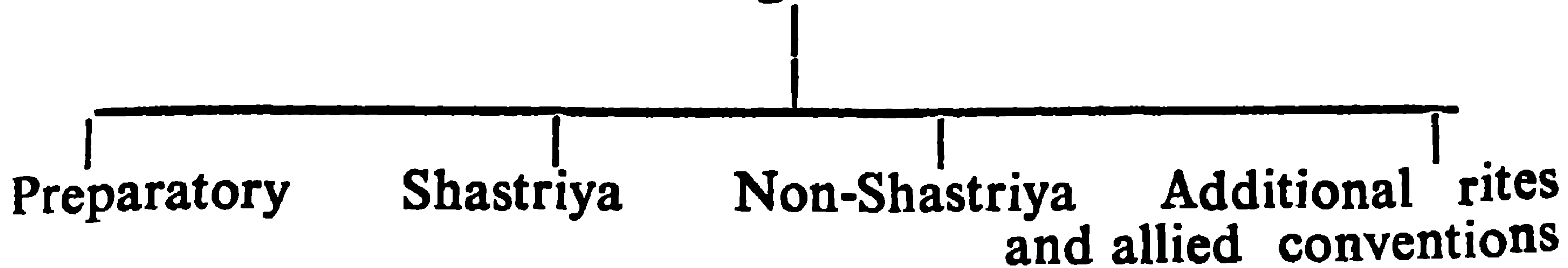
According to Hindu Marriage Law, marriage is thought to be a Sacrament. The society, as a whole, was judged as per interpretation of the details of Manu, which have been quoted in Appendix.

Mitakhsara School and Dayabhaga School are the two Schools of law relating to Hindu laws. The latter is in force in West Bengal, and the former prevails in other parts of India.

A special Hindu Marriage Act was passed in 1954 in the Indian Parliament and on 18th May, 1955, some changes of this Marriage Act were made by it. The Marriage Act has been discussed in details in Appendix. The converted Christian and Muslim citizens of Indian Republic have not been affected by this Act, as according to this Act, no restrictive measures have been imposed upon the Muslims and the Christians of India. According to this Act, a Hindu will not be allowed to marry more than one woman, whereas a Muslim or a Christian has the right to marry more than one woman. Though the Christians are monogamous, yet polygamy is not altogether out-ruled in their society.

Marriage rites and rituals :

For further elaboration of the rituals it is attempted here to describe the nature of Hindu rituals. The Hindu marriage rites and rituals may be classified into four broad categories which are as follows :—



As to preparatory rites and allied conventions the author has observed that just before marriage some preparations or arrangements are made by both the families of the groom and bride for finalisation of the selection of bride and groom. The following rituals may be grouped as preparative :—

(1) Ghatak or go between or match maker. (2) Kusthi-bichar (comparison of horoscopes), (3) Kusthineoa (acceptance of horoscope), (4) Avoidance of marriage or clan exogamy (5) Sapinda (relation within seven generation) (6) Koulinya (sanctity of high birth), (7) Kanyagatakul (sanctity preserv-ed through the daughters), (8) Putragata Kul (sanctity preserved through the sons), (9) Parjaya (genealogical chronology) (10) Mel parity of Kul (generation,) and (11) Time of marriage. All these rituals and allied conventions have been depicted in brief.

The Shastriya rituals are performed by the Brahmin priest, by uttering Sanskritic incantations from the Vedas and other Hindu Shastras, in case of Hindu marriage, and with relevant quotations from the Quoran or the Hadis in case of Muslims, and from the Bible in case of Christians by their own performer. These rituals are more or less rigid.

The Shastriya as well as non-Shastriya marriage rituals of the Hindus have been described together to show the chronological sequence of marriage rituals. The following rituals have been specially referred to in this book and discussed in brief for depicting the nature of observance of rituals in the various stages. Most of these rituals are found surviving among the converted Muslims and Christians.

These rituals are generally observed in the Hindu wedding ceremony :

(1) Meye Dekha (ceremonial interview with bride), (2)

Chhele Dekha (ceremonial interview with the bridegroom), (3) Ashirbad or Paka Dekha (conveying best wishes or blessings and final settlement of marriage), (4) Lagna Patra (Writ of agreement), (5) Loukikata (ceremonial acceptance of marriage proposal), (6) Gatra-Haridra (application of turmeric paste on the body of both the' bride and groom), (7) Halud Kota (ceremonial grinding of turmeric), (8) Anchal Bandha (tying of the corner of the skirts of the bride and groom (9) Anandi Naru (happy-wedding sweet rice-ball), (10) Barihat (giving of puffed pulse paste), (11) Bari-Subhakshan (auspicious moment for preparing balls from Pulses), (12) Aiburobhat (last ceremonial meal of a bachelor or spinster offered by the relatives like brother-in-law, uncle, etc.), (13) Malancha Jagano or phool Jagano (awakening of flower), (14) Chalan-Bati-Sajano (arrangement of shieves and two lamps) (15) Jal Saite Jaoa or Jal Sadha (bringing of ceremonial or holy water by married women from a tank or pond or river), (17) Chor Jal (this rite is a slight deviation from the usual practice of Jal Sadha), (18) Ganga Puja (worship of the Holy Ganges), (19) Ganga Nimantran (ceremonial invitation to the Holy Ganges), (20) Dadhi Mangal (taking of curd by the bride and the bridegroom on an auspicious moment), (21) Gulan Kacha (a kind of ritual) (22) Kara Mongalano (presentation of some thing to the drummer), (23) Dhuli Baran (greeting to the drummer), (24) Madal Puja (worship of Madal), (25) Aiburo- agun-Poano (last touching of fire by the would-be spouse), (26) Bukchata (lying down and rolling on seeds), (27) Gandha Tel (use of perfumed oil by the prospective couple), (28) Nandi Mukha or Briddhi Sradh of Abhyndayika Sradh, (29) Basudhara (worship of mother earth), (30) Kalatalaya Snan (bath of the couple under the banana plant), (31) Hai-amla Bata (grinding of Hai-amla), (32) Monamuni Bhasano (floating of Monamuni), (33) Bridal seat (this is also known as 'Meye Pate Basa)' (34) Kanakanjali (offering of paddy and gold), (35). Varana (welcome), (36) Barbaran (reception of the new bridegroom

(37) Chhadna talaya Stri Achar (rites at the bride's house by the ladies at marriage booth), (38) Satpak Ghorano (going round the groom for seven times), (39) Subha Dristi (aupicious first sight), (40) Malabadal (exchange of garlands), (41) Padya, (42) Achmaniya, (43) Madhuparka, (44) Konejacha, (45) Sampradan (giving away of the bride), (46) Sindur-dan and Laj-bastra (application of vermilion and offering of 'viel to the bride), (47) Kushandika (worship of fire) —this ritual is also divided into—(a) Sam-Vedic ritual, (b) Yajur-Vedic ritual, (c) Rig-Vedic ritual and (d) Atharva-Vedic ritual. Kushandika according to Sam Veda includes the following performances as— (a) Agnisthapan (the setting up of fire), (b) Laja Homa and Shilarohan (offering of paddy to fire and standing on a slab of stone), (c) Saptapadi-gamana (walking of seven steps), (d) Pani Grahanam (clasping of hands), (e) Uttara-Vivaha (past marriage), (f) Bhojanadi and Mantapath (entertainment and utterance of incantations) (g) Chatuspathamantrana (utterance of six different sets of incantations by the bridegroom), (h) Dhriti Homa (utterance of sacred formulae and performance of Maha Byahriti Homa by the groom by invoking Lord Agni (fire), (i) Chaturthi Homa (further fire sacrifice), (j) Udichyakaran—(after Chaturthi Homa, further fire offering to the stars. The gods and goddesses appeased by offering to fire).

According to Yajurveda different items of Kushandika are depicted below.

(a) Agnisthapan, (b) Jaya (Home-offering of clarified butter for thirteen times into the fire), (c) Astadashahuti (fire offering for eighteen times), (d) Laja Homa, (e) Panigrahana, (f) Shilarohan, (g) Agni Pradkshin (going round fire). (h) Prajapatya Homa (offering of clarified butter on the fire with the utterance of some incantations by the bridegroom), (i) Saptapadigaman, (j) Abhisheka of bride (sprinkling of water), (k) Surjya Darsana (seeing the sun), (1) Hridaya-Grahana (acceptance of heart and mind), Shristikrita Homa

(offering of clarified butter to fire by the bridegroom uttering incantations), (n) Dhruba Darsana (showing the Pole-star to the bride), (o) Chaturthi Homa, (p) Prayaschitya Homa (fire worship for atonment).

(48) Dudh Panta Khaoa (taking of stale rice with milk). (49) Lyaja-Muro-Bhat (after the marriage ceremony of the first night is over, the bride and her mother have to take food together from one plate ceremonially with rice and fish), (50) Shajjatuluni (presentation for lifting bed), (51) Baasi Biye (marriage on the second day), (52) Bar Jancha (benedictory ceremony), (53) Subhajatra (auspicious departure of the groom), (54) Hate-Hat-Sapa (placing of bride's palm on that of the groom), (55) Kanakanjali or Rin Sodh (offering of rice or repayment of debt), (56), Badhu Varana (reception of bride), (57) Bar Parichaya (introduction of the groom), (58) Kul Kanta Mara (beating the bride with plum-thorns), (59) Ghar Basat (permanent living), (60) Kal Ratri (on the second day of marriage the bride and the groom are prohibited from sleeping together and seeing each other's face), (61) Gnit Khola (untying of the knot tied up by the priest on the bride and bridegroom's hands at the time of Nandi Mukha etc.) (62) Nam Banchhano (not calling any elderrelative of husband by name), (63) Janmer Bhat Kapar (offering of meal with cloth to the daughter by the mother), (64) Jate tola (ritual acceptance of the bride), (65) Dhulo Pa (immediate return without staying at night in the bride's house), (66) Jore Jaoa (return visit of the couple to the bride's house after marriage), (67) Astamangal auspicious eighth day), (68) Dwiragaman (ceremonial second visit), (69) Worship of Subachani and Satyanarayan, (70) Punarbibaha', (71) Surjya Puja (worship of the Sun God).

Additional rites :

Some additional rites as depicted below are observed along with the essential marriage rites.

(1) Writing the names of couple on Piri (in the morning of the marriage day some married women write the names of married couples on the reverse of Piri, i. e. a wooden-seat), (2) Dristipradip (viewing earthen lamp), (3) Dor Dhara (to obstruct the couple for realising gatemoney, at the entrance of Basarghar), (4) Kari Khela (casting of shells), (5) Juakhela (gambling), (6) Nitbar (the younger companion of the bride groom), (7) Nitkone (the younger companion of the bride), (8) Adhibas (rituals for social superiority), (9) Tatwa (special presentations), (10) Gaye Haluder Tatwa (special presentation at the time of smearing the body with turmeric paste), (11) Melani Bhar (Melani means union. This is a special type of presentation which is sent along with the presettations on the third day after marriage), (12) Barasan (Special seat for bridegoom). On the wedding day a special seat is adorned for the bridegroom which is known as 'Barasan'.

The rites and rituals shown here are practised in course of the wedding ceremony by Hindu High Castes along with some sub-castes. It is very difficult and time-consuming to depict all the rituals in details and that is why recourse to a brief note of each item. But the items which are prevalent among the converted Christians and Muslims has been elaborated as far as practicable.

Death :

Then we have the rituals connected with death. The deadbody is taken out upon a stretcher by relatives and friends to the cremation ground. The funeral procession is followed by throwing fried-rice and pice, and in case of death of old men and women, by a 'Kirtan Party' (band of musieians singing devotional songs). While carrying the

1. In older days when the girls were married before attaining puberty, another prototype of marriage was performed on the fourth day after commencement of her first menstruation cycle. This ceremony was performed in presence of a priest and relatives who were given a feast as in case of a marriage ceremony. This system is now completely out of practice or has become obsolete among high castes, but this practice is in vogue among the people of lower castes.

dead the words 'Bala Hari Hari Bol' are uttered by the ceremators. A handful of ashes alongwith a bone are thrown into the water of a river or pond, if there is no river, after burning. Cremation is thought to be the wisest and best mode of disposal of the dead. The Hindus think so, though the Christians and the Muslims think otherwise and bury their dead. After death 11 days in case of Brahmins and Namasudra are observed as the days of uncleanliness and 30 days in case of others. During this time the sons are to put on Uttareya (a piece of white cloth) and prohited from shaving their body hair and using oil and shoes. They are to pass the days and using a special seat made of Kush (a kind of grass) is observed during these days by taking one meal only a day. The near relatives and the children of the deceased during the days of pollution, do not eat meat and fish.

The ritual of ghat Kamano takes place on the 7th or 11th and 29th day before the Sradha Ceremony is held, when the sons and relatives of the deceased get heads, beard and moustach shaved by the barber who is paid his remuneration for the services he renders.

The concluding ceremony of the man's life is the ceremony in which offerings and oblations are given to the gods and the ancestors by the relations, so that his departed soul may reach the heaven. This is also thought to be a very religious performance, which is called the Sradh Ceremony. After death the daughter any of the deceased perform Sradh Ceremony on the 3rd day. Near relatives and friends are given a feast during the Sradh Ceremony. Besides, annual Sradh Ceremony is held, in which some oblation is made to god and a feast is given to the invited near and dear ones, with the idea that if this rite is performed, the soul of the dead will live in peace in the other world.

MUSLIM RITES AND FESTIVALS.

The principal Muslim festivals are as follows :

(1) Muharram on 10th (Ashurah).

(2) safar 13th, Akhiri Char Shambah, the last convalsence of the Prophet, when he took his bath after recovery of his illness. On this day many Muslims take their bath.

(3) Shaban 14th Shab-i-Bharat—the Night of the Book or Record. This is thought to be the Night when God records all actions of mankind, which will be performed by them during the year to come, and the names of those who will be born and die. It is celebrated with fire-works. It is thought that the souls of the dead appear on this day and the Fakirs are offered food on that day in the name of the deceased. A light is put on in the grave-yard which is called agarbati. The Quran is read out and a special type of Namaz is read out on the day. The virtue of Namaz is sacrificed in the name of the deceased.

(4) Ramdan 21st—Death of Ali.

(5) Shawwal 1st, 'Id-ul-Fitr'—the breaking of the Fast of Ramdan.

(6) Dh'i-Hijjah 18th, 'Id-ud-Duha' or Baqarah'Id—the Feast of Sacrifice of the cow (Baqariah) or horse, camel goat. The converted Muslims very rarely indulge in the Feast of the sacrifice of the cow.

Other festivals observed by the Muslims are as follows :

(1) Rajab 27th,-Mi'raj—the Miraculous Night-journey of the Prophet.

(2) Ramdan 27th,-Laylat-ul-Quadr—the Night of the Revelation of the Quran.

(3) Rabi-'ul-Awwal 12th-Barah Wafat commemorates the death of the Prophet (in India), though it is also observed throughout the Muslim world as the day of his birth, and, as such, is known as the Mawlud.

In addition to the two 'Ids (Id-ul-Fitr and Id-ud-Duha), which are observed by all Muslims, the Shiahs have officiall

recognised a certain number of festivals connected with the History of their Twelve Imams.

Throughout the year, the Muslims observe some religious festivals which have direct bearing upon their religious belief and practices. Irrespective of the rich and poor, all Muslim villagers are found to participate in the above principal Muslim festivals.

In order to commemorate the tragic death of Husain and Hasan the Muslims observe Muharrum. During Muharrum, a Tomb (Tazia) is prepared and mock-fighting, etc. are displayed by the Muslims, specially by the Shiahs. Though there is a very little scope for the Hindus to take part in the Muslim festivals on religious grounds, yet some Hindus are found to take part in the Muharrum. Ten days prior to the actual celebration of Muharrum, the villagers raise subscriptions. A tomb (Tazia) is prepared by bamboo frame-works and is covered by coloured paper.

Hasan and Husain, the grandsons of Prophet Mohammad, were killed by their enemies in a battle-field in Karbala. So in order to commemorate that battle, the participants observe this day by staging a mock-fight. Most of the Sunnis are not found to participate in this festival. With the Tazia, the participants are found to visit the houses of the Hindus of the respective villages, who also contribute to the party either in cash or in kind, whatever they can afford, in order to help them in meeting the expenses of the festival.

In order to earn merit, the Muslims observe Sab-i-Barat. During this festival, reading from the passages of the Holy Quran and gifts to the poor are made. Likewise, I'd-ud-Duha (Baqarah 'Id) is observed, when animal sacrifice after prayer is made. On the birthday of Prophet Mohammad, a festival known as Fateha-Duaz-Daham is observed. During this festival, reading of the relevant passages from the Holy Quran is done. In order to earn merit, Shab-i-Barat is observed by the Muslim. In this festival, gifts to the poor are made. The nature of gifts is unused gold, cash which are called Zakat and immoval property cannot be offered as Zakat.

The above are the principal festivals, as are found to be practised by the Muslims in West Bengal and other parts of India.

Though the Muslims and the Hindus in many socio-religious affairs maintain separate views, yet some Hindus are found to participate in the Muharrum Festival and make offer to the shrines of Muslim Saints on some occasions. On the other hand, some Muslims who are converts from the Hindus, were also found by the author, in course of his ivestigation work, to offer worship to the Hindu Folkdeities, as depicted in the relevant chapter, which are against the tenets of Islam.

Birth rituals :

As soon as the child is born, the umbilical cord is cut by a midwife, an 'Ajan' is uttered into the ear of the new-born baby. After birth during 40 days the lying-in woman is not allowed to attend prayer, she can participate in the Milad which is mainly the discussion on the Prophet Muhammad.

Akkikka :

It is a ritual performance in which, according to Islamic customs, the child is named after mother, in case of a female one, and father, in case of a male one.

As soon as the child is born, it is bathed at first, and then wrapped with a clean cloth, when 'Ajan' is read out into his right ear, and 'Akkamat' into the left. If it is a male child, a couple of beasts like, goats sheep or camels are sacrificed by Korbani. But in case of a female child, killing of one animal will do.

The Akkikka's meat is strictly prohibited in case of parents and the person in favour of whom Akkikka is made. This ritual performance is not compulsory and may be done when the child becomes much older.

Naming rituals :

The naming system as is prevailing among the Muslims, differs in many respects from that practised by the converted Muslims.

The off-springs of Muslims, it has been observed, invariably

belong to their father's sect. Mohammedans are divided into four great classes, such as, (a) Saiyed, (b) Shaikh, (c) Mughal and (d) Pathans.

The Shaikhs are of three types, such as, (a) Shaikh Qurayshee to which class Prophet Mohammad Mustafa and his descendants belonged; (b) Shaikh Siddique descendants of Abu Bakar Siddique and (c) Shaikh Farooque, who are descendants of Omar. The word 'Saiyed', among various other significations, means a 'Chief'.

The Pathan caste has descended from Prophet Yaqoob or Jacob. Its origin is thus recorded in a work entitled 'Syer'.

"If the new-born be the son of a Shaikh, then at the beginning of his name is added one of the following surnames, such as, Khoja, Golam, Mohammad, Deen, Bukhs, Allee, Shaikh. Yusoof, Golam Nubee. A Saiyed is also found to use these names by dropping their surnames. In such cases, the person is asked if he is a Saiyed or Shaikh".

If he be the son of a Mughal, the name of the child commences or terminates with the words Mirza, Beg, Aga, as Mirza Ahmed, Ismail Beg and Aga Jafar.

If the male child belongs to a Pathan, the word Khan is generally used at the end of its name ; such as, Bahadoor Khan, Udar Khan, Hosain Khan, etc.

If the father be a Shaikh and the mother a Saiyed, the word Shurruf is usually added to the beginning or end of the infant's name, such as Jaffar Shurruf or Shurruf Jaffar.

In case of a female child, the Saiyed use Begum, Bibi or Bie, Nissa and Shah, such as, Rooquer Begum, Tynub Bibi or Bibi Tynub, Sukuna Bie, etc. The Shaikh adds the words Ma, Bee or Bibi, Shurruf Ma, Mumuda Bee, Jamula Bibi to the name of the Female Child.

The noble men, as a mark of dignity, add the word Begum to the end of the name of their female children, such as, Koolsoon Begum. This is found also among the Mughals and Pathans.

The Mughal tribe apply the word Khanum commonly to

the end of the name of a female child, such as, Izzut Khanum.

The Pathans add to the end of the name of the female child the word of Khatoon or Banu, such as, Fatuma Khatoon, Rupmut Khatoo. Lailu Banoo and Sairah Banu etc.

Menstrual rituals :

The Muslims do not observe any hard and fast rule, in connection with performance of menstrual rites. When a girl starts her menstruation, she is kept isolated for a few days and is not allowed to participate in any religious performance, like fasting during the Ramzan, etc. Sunnat ceremony is observed in case of male child.

Muslim marriage :

According to the Islamic law before marriage, the man intending to marry may have a look at the woman whom he intends to marry. Once a man came to the Prophet and said that he was marrying a woman from among the Ansars and the Holy Prophet said to him, "Hast thou looked at her ?" On his replying in the negative the Prophet said, "Then go and look at her, there is a defect in the eyes of some Ansars". In another Hadith it is said that when Mughira-ibn-Shuba made a proposal of marriage to a woman, the Holy Prophet asked him if he had seen her and on his replying in the negative, he asked him to see her, because it was likely to bring about greater love and concord between them. The consent of both the man and the woman is essential for marriage, and the Holy Quran lays down expressly that the two must agree. In this respect much will depend on the prevailing customs among a people and satisfaction may be had either personally or through female relatives as is the general practice in India.

Ahmed Shukri quoting all earlier authorities (Abd-al-Qadir, al-Nahr, p. 218) says; "The time for seeing her should precede the betrothal...The woman is recommended to have a look at the man, if she wants to marry him; because anything that would please her with him, will please him with her and each of them can renew his or her glances whenever he or she wants".

When a man who wants to marry, has satisfied himself about a woman, he makes a proposal for marriage, either to the woman in question or her parents or guardians.

If a man makes a proposal of marriage to a woman, others are forbidden to propose to the same woman till the first proposal is rejected. Likewise a woman may also make proposal of marriage to a man. It is generally the man who proposes the marriage of his daughter or sister to a man. It becomes an engagement when assent has been given to the proposal of marriage. A certain time is usually allowed to pass before the Nikah (marriage) takes place and this time is allowed only to study each other so that anything undesirable may not happen later on in the union. This engagement may be dissolved as it is only after Nika that the two wedding parties are bound to each other matrimonially. No particular age has been specified for marriage in the Islamic law. In fact, with the difference of climatic conditions, there would necessarily be, difference in marriageable age in different countries. But the Holy Quran does not speak of marriage which it identifies with the age of exercising his choice in matters of sexual liking or disliking. A man or woman who has not attained puberty, naturally fails to exercise his choice in sexual matters. As such, marriage before attaining puberty seems not to have social recognition. According to some school of the Islamic thought, the marriageable age, in the case of a male, is at least 20 years, and in case of a female 12 years.

Marriage, according to Islamic Law is called Mithaq (covenant) in the Holy Quran ; a covenant between the husband and the wife. The marriage contract is entered into by mutual consent expressed by the two parties, the husband and the wife, in the presence of witnesses and that is the only essential. This mutual consent is technically called ijab (affirmation or declaration) and qubul (acceptance or consent) in Fiqh. The marriage is made complete by the expression of mutul consent in the presence of witnesses, but it was the practice of the Prophet to deliver a Khutba (Sermon) before the declaration of

marriage was made, to give it the character of a sacred contract. A mahr (dowry) must also be settled on the woman, according to the Holy Quran, but the marriage is valid even if mahr is not mentioned, or even if the amount of Mohur is not agreed upon. The words of mutual consent may be addressed each other by the two parties, but generally it is the Khatib (the man who delivers the Khutba) who puts the proposal before each party, for giving their consent to the proposal. Sayyid Amir Ali says in his Muhammadan Law that according to the Shias, the marriage is valid without the presence of witness, but this doctrine cannot hold in the presence of what is clearly stated to be the practice of the Holy Prophet. Moreover, when there is a plain direction in the Holy Quran as to the necessity of witness at the time of divorce, it stands to reason that the presence of witness at the time of solemnization of marriage should be equally necessary.

The second important item in the Muslim marriage is the mahr or dowry. The word generally used for dowry in the Holy Quran is ajr meaning reward or a nuptial gift which is given to the bride. The word Mohur is used in Hadith to signify dowry as the nuptial gift. According to the Holy Quran, the mahr is given as a free gift by the husband to the wife, at the time of contracting marriage. The payment of the mahr on the part of the husband is a kind of recognition of the wife. for she becomes the owner of some property immediately after the marriage, before which she may not have owned anything. As such settling of dowry on any permissible kind for the marriage is obligatory. The payment of dowry is also necessary in case of marriage with a slave girl and also in the case of a Muslim marrying a non-Muslim woman.

Hadith speaks of that in exceptional cases marriage becomes valid even the amount of mohr the quantity of which depends upon the circumstances of the husband and position of woman, has not been fixed, but dowry is obligatory and must be paid at the time of consummation of marriage or afterwards.

Where the Holy Quran speaks of marriage, it at the same

time, excludes clandestine sexual relations, fornication and keeping paramours to recognise as marriage. Thus obviously the fact that distinguishes marriage from fornication and clandestine relations, is its publicity. Mutual consent of the two parties concerned, to live as husband and wife, does not suffice to constitute a marriage, unless that consent is expressed publicly and in the presence of witnesses. As such, one of the most essential features of Muslim marriage is, therefore, the publication of the ceremony, by gathering together in a public place. The delivery of Sermon before the announcement of marriage is another important factor which helps the marriage to be brought to the knowledge of other, and at the same time, serves the double purpose of giving the wedding a sacred character and making it an occasion for the education of the community. When the relatives and other invitees of both the wedding parties have assembled a Khutba (Sermon) is delivered by some one from among the party or by some Imam prior to announcement of the marriage. The sermon must explain to the audience the mutual rights and duties of the couple. The delivery of Khutba (Sermon) having been concluded the announcement that such and such man and woman have accepted each other as husband and wife, is made along with the announcement of mahr (dowry). The concerning bride and the groom are then asked if they are ready to accept the new matrimonal relationship. The reply being given in the affirmative, the wedding ceremony is finalised In India the constent of the prospective bride is generally obtained through her father or other legal guardian or relation. After this mutual wedding consent has been expressed ritually by both the wedding parties, the whole audience raises its hands and prays to Allah for bestowing his blessings upon the newly married couple. Some wedding sweets are distributed to the audience just before it disperses.

After Nikah is performed, the bride is conducted to the groom's house and this is followed by a marriage feast called Walima which is another step for publicity of the marriage

and hance, the Holy Prophet laid stress on it. Guardianship in case of marriage of the couple who remain minor, is essential. In the absence of a real guardian, the king of the State may act as a guardian.

In Islam, polygamy is allowed only as an exception. It is expressly so stated in the Holy Quran ; "And if you fear that you cannot act equitably towards orphans, then marry such women as seem good to you, two and three and four; and if you fear that you will not be able to do justice (between them) then (marry) only one" (4:3). This seems to be the only passage in the Holy Quran that speaks of polygamy and it will be seen that it does not sanction polygamy: it only permits it, and that too, conditionally. It is also clear from this verse that polygamy in Islam, is allowed only when there are orphans to be brought up and it is thought that they could not be looked after properly. This condition relates more to the welfare of the society than to the needs of the individual. After all Islam recognizes the union of one man with one woman only as a valid form of marriage. But only in exceptional cases it allows a man more wives than one but not exceeding four. Islam does not allow a woman to have more husbands than one. As such a married woman, unless and until she is divorced, cannot contract a valid marriage whereas a man may enjoy that right. It also means that Islam does not allow Polyandry. A man can marry at a time, four ladies, during the life-time of whom he is not allowed to marry again. But after the death of his wife, a man can marry, as occasion may need, but not exceeding four ladies. On the other hand, a woman can marry once in her life. But on the death of her husband or in case of being divorced by her husband, a woman can marry again. Likewise, she can also marry as many times, as her husband will die or divorce her.

Marriage customs of Muslims :

Since by religious mandate, a Muslim is enjoined to choose as his wife any woman outside the prohibited degrees who professes one of the three Scriptural religions, it would

seem that there can be no endogamy within the Muhammadan social system. But it is a general proposition. The law of Islam does not necessarily approve all such marriages, and has provided safeguards against those marriages which it disapproves, thus greatly reducing the circle within which a Muslim may select a wife. Customs too step in, to contract that circle still further. Legal restrictions exist in both branches of Islam, the Shia and the Sunni, in respect of such marriages, but these are important only with the latter. The customary restrictions, however, exist among all Mohammedans alike.

Both among Sunnis and Shias, it is the custom to select a wife, from a relatively small circle of close relations, including not only a man's own family, but families with which his own has in the past, inter-married. This system is probably due to the peculiarities of the Mahommedan law of inheritance, and it is observed very strictly. The natural result of this custom is that the marriage of cousins is extremely common. No sort of cousin is within the prohibited degrees. It may be mentioned, as a curious proof of the frequency of cousin marriage, that Mohammedans constantly address or describe their parents-in-law by the terms for the various kinds of uncle and aunt. This custom is natural, because the parents-in -law so often are uncle and aunt. It is obvious that such a 'marriage circle' ensues equality of descent, and it is the only endogamous group of which a Mohammedan takes any account.

Remarriage of widows:

Remarriage of a widow is not only permitted by law, but also enjoined in the Quran. The first wife of Prophet himself was widow. If a marriage contract is terminated by the death of one of the contracting parties, there is just no reason why the other should not enter into another similar contract. But such remarriage is uncommon, at all events, among the better classes.

Divorce.

Divorce is permitted by the Mohammadan law, being merely the natural result of the conception of marriage as a

contract. But it is one of the permitted things that are not approved. "Divorce, said the Prophet, is the most detestable to the Almighty God, of all permitted things"' Accordingly it is hedged about by many legal restrictions. If the husband within his full sense utters thrice the word Talak (I leave you), then the divorce is completed, but if being not in sense i.e. at angry mood or in intoxicated mood, the divorce is not justified but the husband will have to atone by offering something to the people. Divorce is prohibited when the menstrual discharge is on.

Muta or temporary marriages:

The Akbari School of Shias permits Muta or temporary marriages, i.e. marriages for a fixed period, which may be as short as a day, or as long as decades. This custom too, is subjected to many legal restrictions as obviously, if the period is sufficiently long, there is little practical difference between a Muta and ordinary marriage.

Muslim marriage rituals in details:

The marriage contract, including dowry, are usually settled beforehand. Fixing up a date, the bridal parties assemble at the house of the bride's father. The bride's Vakil or proxy, who should be an elderly relative, meets the bride behind the Pardah (screen) with a woman attendant and in presence of two witnesses, he asks her consent for marriage with the selected groom. Having received her consent and signifying the same to the parties the Kazi then asks the groom if he is willing to marry and on receiving an affirmative reply the Kazi then performs the wedding service. The Kazi next causes the bridegroom to repeat after him in Arabic the formula of the marriage contract and explains its meaning. This being done, the Vakils of the bride and the bridegroom clasp hands, and the former says, "The bride (naming her and her father) has, through my agency in the presence of two witnesses, given her gracious consent to your marriage with her, and such a muhr is settled upon her: do you consent to it. The bridegroom replies; With my whole heart and soul,

to my marriage with this lady as well as, to this settlement upon her, do I consent," and repeats the word "consent" thrice. In some cases it is found that at the time of marriage, the groom utters "I marry the daughter of such and such, offering the fixed Den Muhr. The bride will utter in reply, "I accept your offer." But the Kazi will, at first, read out the Khotba to the bridegroom. In conclusion, the Kazi pronounces a blessing on the married couple. The formal demand by the Vakil of the bride's consent to the marriage (even if she be a minor), and the formal intimation of that consent to the bridegroom are both significant.

The essential rules to be observed during the Muslim marriage, are—(1) both the bride and the groom should be matured enough to understand the implications of their marriage; (2) marriage is not permissible with a nonsense or a Kritadasi slave-girl); (3) the bride should be a female and the groom a male; an eunuch is not allowed to marry; (4) both the bride and the groom should clearly hear the Ijab Kabul (Promise) of each other; but if the marriage is held by a Kazi (pleader), they need not hear the same; (5) the witnesses to the Ijab Kabul (promise) should not be less than two and the bride should be adult enough to utter herself the wedding Kabul (promise); (6) the utterance of promise should be made in one meeting; (7) the groom should not refuse to pay the 'Den mohor', the money to be accepted by the bride from her husband instead of her family gifts; (8) both the witnesses should hear the utterance of promise at a time, separate hearing will pollute the marriage rite; (9) both the witnesses of the bride and the groom should be well-acquainted; (10) the witnesses should not be female only; (11) witnesses like slave, nonsense, minor and Kafer are not acceptable; (12) in case of a minor bride without her guardian, marriage will not be proper, if it is conducted by the witnesses and the pleader; (13) the Kazi, that is he who will read out the wedding Khotba, may be given some remuneration for the service he renders, according to one's means; (14) offering presentations

to the bride and the groom are allowed; (15) to bathe the bride and the bridegroom with turmeric paste is not allowed; Of course for neatness, only bathing is allowed. Gatra Haridra, as in case of the Hindus, is prohibited in case of Muslim marriage; (16) to apply Mehdi (a colour) on the palms and garlands round the neck is thought to be sinful; (17) likewise tying of a red thread round the waist of the bride, as in the case of Hindu marriage, is not permissible in case of Muslim marriage; (18) offer of milk or water for drinking of the groom in which the fingers of the bride have been dipped is sinful; (19) Likswise touching of necks by the bride and the groom together (Sejada) is not permissible; (20) performance of dance, music and song in the wedding house are not permissible; (21) bursting crackers, display of fire-works and use of coloured liquid or clay are sinful; (22) it is sinful to go to marry with beating of drums aud female inmates accompanying; (23) the guardian of the bride is not allowed to accept money from the groom's party—of course, after fixation of the bride price, he can accept it with the consent of the bride; (24) marriage, in case of the Muslim is not permissible with (a) step-mother and her first daughter, (b) sister and her daughter, (c) maternal aunts and uncles, (d) grand-daughter and grand-son, (e) father-in-law and mother-in-law, (f) daughter of the woman with whom marital relationship has been made, (g) the daughter-in-law (wife of son), (h) sister of wife during her life-time, (i) a woman whose husband is living, (j) mother of the paternal grand-mother and some onward relations, (k) mother of the maternal grand-mother and her grand daughter's daughter and some downward relations; (l) daughter of the grand-daughter and some downward relations, (m) daughter of niece and some downward relations; (n) daughter of step-brother, (o) marriage with a married woman, a pregnant widow is prohibited; (p) Hindu and Christian ladies and prostitutes even after their conversion to Islam are not fit for marriage by any Muslim; (q) it is sinful to use vermilion on the hair-parting or forehead by a married woman.

After marriage, a feast should be arranged within seven days.

Taboos for Muslim women :

1) The newly married wife should always be kept under screen and should not use lilen clothing and Parchul (wig)

(2) A Muslim woman may wear gold or silver ornaments, but not those which will wound her. It is sinful to wear Mal or Ghungur, i. e. ornaments of the foot which may sound.

(3) A Muslim woman, in case of an emergency too, will have to go elsewhere with a Borkha or screen on.

(4) A Muslim woman is not allowed to offer alms to any beggar outside the house.

5) A Muslim woman is not allowed to go to the market for sale or purchase. Of course, the elderly women can go with Borkha on.

(6) A Muslim woman is not allowed to wear bangles sitting near the bangle-seller or a goldsmith.

(7) A Muslim woman is not allowed to shave her hair in any case, which is highly sinful.

8) It is sinful on the part of a Muslim woman to get her nails pared off by a barber after child-birth.

(9) Use of Jafrani red bress, Mehdi, Surma and scented penfumes etc. by a divorced or widowed woman is prohibited.

(10) After the death of husband, a woman should have to mourn for four months and ten days.

Taboos for the Muslims :

(1) A Muslim schould not cut his hair fashionably, i. e. keeping long hair in front, and short on the back of the head. It is sinful to shave hair on the head and beard and moustache or facial hair.

(2) A muslim should cut his hair, beard and moustache after two or three weeks, not after fourteen days.

(3) It is sinful on the part of a Muslim to drink wine or anything which leads to intoxication.

(4) It is sinful to indulge in gambling and play cards or dice.

(5) One should not mourn for the dead for more than three months.

Ritual relating to death :

Just before *death* he or she is laid on a sacred bed and made to utter "Touba". If he or she is unable to do that, another man will utter the word before him or her thrice, and will read Kalma Sahadat repeatedly, and some selected passages from the Holy Quoran. The dying man or woman is made to lie down keeping his head towards the north and the feet towards the south.

It is sinful to cry loudly for a dead. One should mourn the death of one 's parents' brothers, grand-father, uncles, etc, for three days and nights.

After the death of her husband, the wife will have to mourn for four months and ten days, and during that period it is sinful to wear ornaments, fine clothes, or use Mehdi on palms or feet, apply Surma (collyrium) on the eye-lids and use scents or scented oil, also not allowed to see the face of any such persons excepting her very close relation.

The dead should be washed or bathed well with water boiled with camphor. If these are not available, only hot water is used.

After death, the whole body is washed with soap, For want of soap, a fine cloth is used to rub out the soil from the body.

The grave is dug man-size in lenght and one and a half cubic in breadth, a sitting man-size in depth. The dead is placed in the grave, keeping its head towards the north and feet towards south.

The name of the dead is tabooed to be written on the graveyard, and it is sinful to bow down at the grave and to eat anything in the graved yard.

It is sinful to throw any pitcher on the graveyard after funeral. It is reported that after death either on the 3rd or 7th or 10th day but compulsorily on the 40th day the ritual known as 'kul' is observed. At that time the Quran is read out along with 'Surah' and somewhere Chhola (maize) is used to count the member of prayer in the name of the deceased. The virture of the prayer is sacrificed in the name of the deceased. Those who read out the 'Surah' are given a feast.

CHRISTIAN RITES AND FESTIVALS

Religious festivities :

The religious festivals observed by the Christians, are very few in comparison to those observed by the Muslims and the Hindus. The main rsligious festivals observed by the Christians, are (1) Christmas Day that is the birth-day of Jesus Christ, which is observed by the Christians and the converted Christians. On this day, the Chistian are found to offer flowers, sweets aud cakes to, the poor and patients. They pass the day in merry-making. They decorate their houses with lights, flowers, etc,. on this day and cakes of different kinds are also joyously eaten by them. (2) Good Friday or the Death Anniversary of Jesus Christ : This day is mourned by the Christians. They join the mass prayer in the church on this day. When offices. schools and colleges generally remain closed. As a mark of universal reapect to Jesus Christ, who was crusified by his enemies on this day.

Rituals relating to birth :

Baptism :

Among the Christians, the birth of a child is generally announced in the local newspapers.

The birth has to be registered with the Local Registration officer of Births, Marriages and Deaths, within six weeks. The obligation to register, is on the parents.

Naming the baby :

The choice of a Christian name or names for a boy or a girl is important. A badly chosen Christian name may be an embarrassment to a child when he or she attains maturity, while a well-chosen name may contribute to social poise and status.

A child should be given a name that will wear well and outlive changing fasions, He or she should not be called after a public celebrity or given too high-sounding a name. Outmoded Biblical names, like Noah, and Solomon etc. are generally avoided.

If the child is to be given a family name, an old birth certificate or a marriage certificate should be consulted to see that the spelling is quite correct, if it is somewhat unusual. A family name can be distinctive, but it should be authentic.

Choosing the Godparents : .

Baby should be christened between three and six weeks after birth. Before christening the baby the god-parents should be chosen if it is to be done in accordance with the usage of the Church of England. Two god-fathers and one god-mother are required for a boy, and one godfather and two god-mothers for a girl.

During christening only intimate friends and those who believe in the teaching of the Church should be invited.

It is the tradition that the principal god-parent should give the child a present and also that he or she should remember the child's birthday as the occasion comes round.

The god-parent undertakes religious duties regarding the child. He or she is responsible for seeing that the child attends the church, is brought up in the Christian faith, and is brought eventually to the Bishop to be confirmed. That is, baptism is not just a social convention, but a Sacrament of the Church, and it is the responsibility of the godparents who have taken religious vows at the administration of this Sacrament, to discharge them concientiously in the highest interests of the child.

In some churches, it is the father of the child who takes the baptismal vows. He should be a baptised member of the Church.

The meaning of Baptism :

Baptism is much more than a social convention, whereby the child receives a Christian name. It is the ingrafting of the child into the Body of Christ, which is the Church. The Church is Christ's redeemed community, and children of baptised parents are heirs of His covenant of grace. In holy baptism, God brings them into the family and house-

hold of the faith, and makes them members of Christ and citizens of the kingdom of heaven. Therefore, they are given a Christian name. Their surname indicates their family or clan. Their Christian name is their new, individual name as members of Christ's Church.

The traditional christening robe is not now necessary, nor is there any necessity for any special dress for fathers or good-parents. In a Church, the god-mother holds the baby and place it on the left arm of the clergyman when asked for the child's name, she gives only the Christian name or names.

The Christening cake and meal :

It is usual to invite intimate friends to a simple meal after the christening, when the christening cake is cut and handed over to the guests.

Christian marriage :

On various occasions of family life, such as, wedding, baptism and funeral the Christians like the people belonging to other religious faiths involve themselves in ceremonies. These occasions in family life are turning-points. That is why, these are celebrated with some rituals. The Christians are monogamous. No Christian is allowed to marry for the second time till his first wife is legally divorced. Divorce on various grounds is allowed legally. The Christians generally avoid close blood relations during selection of brides and gooms. But cross cousin and parallel cousin marriage i. e. marriag between the children of the brothers and sisters is permissible. Marriage betweein a Protestant and a Catholic is permissible provided religious sect is changed during marriage.

Marriage rituals as observed by the Christians :

The popularity of the month of June for wedding purpose is due to an old tradition, dating back in time to the days of ancient Rome. June was the month dedicated to the Goddess Juno, and Juno was regardad as the Protectoress of women especially of married women. June, therefore, was thought

to be the most favourable time for marriage, as May, the month just before it, was considered to be the most unfavourableone.

The belief that May was an unlucky month in which to marry, goes very far back in time. Some scholars think that the origin of the belief must be looked for in primitive fertility rites. The month of May was called after Maia, the goddess of spring, and spring in all parts of the world is the growing season. It may well be the tradition that marriage should not take place until May is over as it seems to be a faint echo of the strict abstention practised by some primitive people to ensure the well-being of their newly-sown seed.

It is certain that in ancient Rome matrimonial contracts were frowned upon until the month of May had passed and June had come, and the Romans brought the tradition with them to some other countries together with many of the marriage customs which are still in use today. One of the most important of these, apart from actual religious ritual, in the placing by the bridegroom, of a ring upon the finger of the bride.

As to origin of use of wedding ring mythology attributes the making of the first ring to Prometheus, the friendly Titan who brought down upon himself the wrath of Zeus by stealing fire from Olympus for the benefit of man. Whoever the real inventor may have been, the man who first introduced the use of a ring in a marriage ceremony might have some poetic thought. The ring being circular, has no end as such, it has been regarded as the symbol of eternity; and the significance of using it in marriage, is that true love, also, will continue for ever,

Prepararation for wedding :

There is more involved in a wedding than the actual arrangements for it. It is a life commitment, and deserves a sane decision before effecting the union.

Marriage means comradship. It also means parenthood, and parenthood rests largely on health and tradition.

For a happy union, the young people should come to know one another's parents before becoming engaged. Their parents also like to know whom their daughter or son is going out with. When engaged, there should be a definite introduction of parents to one another.

In marriage, it is not always necessary to put the announcement of the engagement in the newspaper. If the matter is of social interest, it may be done. The wearing of an engagement-ring is sufficient indication in one's immediate circle, yet a girl may also have a wider circle, say, of school or college friends, who may be interested in her engagement. The announcement is usually paid for and put in the social column of the press for intimating such wide circle.

Legal side : Notice of marriage :

The formalities connected with the legal side of marriage are not formidable. For the great majority of marriages it will be found that the normal way of proclamation of engagement in a Church is the best way. It may simply be good custom, or it may be something deeper, but it is satisfying to the parties concerned to have their intention to marry duly proclaimed in a Church.

Marriage in a Registrar's Office before a registrar is perfectly legal, but on more than one occasion, the brides who go through this ceremony feel unhappy about it, and they insist on being married with religious rites.

In some cases, the parties concerned go to the Registrar's Office because they want a quiet wedding, and they are afraid that a wedding before a clergyman will be too much fuss.

Two witnesses are all that are necessary in this case, as in registration marriage.

Having made up their minds as to where and when the marriage is to take place, the parties should give notice of marriage. They should see that this is done at least a month before or sufficiently ahead of the wedding, if they wish to be married in the normal way.

By English law, marriage must be either a religious ceremony in a Church or other building, and duly registered; or a civil ceremony in a Registration Office. Marriages in private houses, in halls, or in hotels, are illegal.

Proclamation by Banns :

In this case, it is necessary to give the clergyman seven days' notice in writing of the intention to be married, stating the place of residence of each party and the period during which each of them has resided at his or her place of residence.

Banns are read on three consecutive Sundays, after which the marriage can be celebrated.

The purpose of proclamation of Banns is to give publicity. It is an offence to give wrong or misleading names.

The certificate of Banns is valid for three months. The hours during which the marriage can be celebrated, are generally between 8 a. m. and 6 p. m. It is usually celebrated in the bride's church and by her own minister.

This is the normal procedure of marriage in accordance with the Christian rites, but there are other ways of satisfying the legal requirements. They are more expensive, the fees for the proclamation of Banns being a matter of considerable expense, but the additional expense may save much inconvenience if it be the case of an emergeney.

Marriage by Licence :

This alternative procedure involves application by one or other of the contracting parties to the local church or any Bishop's Registration Office. Application must be made in person, and one of the parties must have established a residential qualification of fifteen days in the district in which the marriagc is to be celebrated. The marriage can take place immediately the licence is received. The fees are generally moderate.

Special Licence :

The Special Licence for marriage is granted only in emergency by permission of the respective authorities of Church and application must be made personally by the prospective

bride or bridegroom to the address already given. Marriage by special licence may take place at any hour of the day.

Marriage in a Non-Anglican Church requires an "authorised person" to be present to register the marriage. The minister himself may be this "authorised person". If he is not, then the Registrar himself is required to be present.

As regardes giving notice, it must be given by each of the contracting parties to the Superintendent Registrar or the District Registrar of Births, Marriages, and Deaths of the registration district, in which he or she lives. If both live in the same district, one notice is sufficient. The residential qualification is seven clear days.

Twenty-one clear days, in addition, must then elapse, after which the Registrar issues a certificate. The marriage may then take place within three calendar months in the place of worship of his or her denomination nearest to the registration district, in which one or other of the contracting parties resides.

Registrar's Licence :

The Superintendent Registrar can issue a licence for marriages within his registration district on similar terms to the common licence issued by the episcopal authority of the respective Church.

Civil marriage or marriage by Registrar :

A Superintendent Registrar is authorised to marry after proclamation or after granting of licence on terms similar to above. This marriage, however, must not be conjoined with any religious rite. It consists of two declarations ;—

"I do solemnly declare that I know not of any lawful impediment for which I, A, B, may not be joined in matrimony to C, D"

"I call upon these persons present to witness that I, A, B, do take thee, C, D, to be my lawful wedded wife (or husband)".

The Registrar receives his proper remuneration for the services he renders if in case of marrige by licence or by other ways.

The civil ceremony may be followed by a religious service in the chapel. This service, however, is not the actual legal marriage. This has already taken place in the Registrar's Office.

A District Registrar of Marriages is authorised to marry persons irrespective of what their religious pursuasions may be. The amount of fee varies in quantity. A marriage in a Registrar's Office may not take place on Sunday.

Wedding arrangements—The bride decides the date of wedding :

In addition to consulting the clergymen to see if the church is available, and if he is free to conduct the wedding on the date desired, there are other matters which must be checked up before the date of marriage is finally fixed. One of the most important of these is to secure accommodation for reception.

The essential preliminaries for smooth going of wedding arrangements involve making sure that the clergyman, church and accommodation for the wedding reception are all available on the desired date.

The following are the essential formalities observed in Christian marriages :

(1) That bridemaid (s) and best-man are informed in good time of the date of the wedding.

(2) That notice of marriage is duly given.

(3) That church and minister and organist, and the place for reception are all fixed for the date of the wedding.

(4) That if an extra minister is desired, the wishes of the clergyman of the church be ascertained in the first instance. It is a bad form to invite a minister to perform a marriage ceremony in another man's church but there is no objection to his assisting.

(5) That the amount of the church fees and organist's fees be obtained from the verger.

(6) That invitations be printed and, at the same time, hymn-sheets be ordered for use of the guests at the church service.

(7) That, in due time, bouquets and flowers for the decoration of the church be ordered.

(8) That the bridemaid (s) be directed as to what they shall wear. This directive is the prerogative of the bride. It is presumed that she has ordered her own dress long ago.

(9) That certain young men, preferably unmarried, be appointed as ushers, and one told he is to act as head-usher.

(10) That, if so desired, arrangements be made for photographs to be taken at the church or at some convenient time and place on the date of wedding.

(11 That cars or suitable conveyances be available for taking the principal parties to the church and for taking the guests from the church to the place of the reception after the wedding ceremony.

(12) That guests be told as tactfully as possible, that care should be taken that the church door and other adjacent places, are not made defiled. A church is a place of worship, not place for hilarity.

(13) That, if so desired, arragements may be made for the entertainment of the guests after the reception.

(14) That arrangements should be made for a rehearsal of the wedding procedure in the church, if this is thought necessary.

In addition, furnishing of the new home, arranging of the honeymoon, the decision as to who are to be invited should be made before the wedding.

Invitation of guests :

A list of guests is prepared, concerning which the bridegroom and his parents are consulted, and invitations are sent out a month before or sufficiently ahead of the date fixed for the wedding . These invitations may be formal or informal.

There are occasions when an informal invitation is better than a formal one. If the total number of guests is small, it is better simply to write to them.

If the bride wishes to be a little more formal, her mother can invits the guests. The mother should certainly do so in the case of the friends of the bridegroom.

Acceptance of invitation :

Guests should make a formal acceptance of a formal invitation and an informal acceptance of an informal one.

The other essentials are arɹangements for reception, music and sitting of guests.

Two other matters require to be attended to in good time—the provision of wedding-cake and refreshments for the guests.

Refreshments. such as are desired for a wedding, should be modest in supply, and provision should be made for such guests as do not indulge in alcoholic liquors.

Wedding garments.

The very old custom of using wedding garments which were used in the past, is in practice at present . The veil made of lace or some other costly materials treasured as a valuable heirloom was frequenly handed down form mother to daughter through many generations. Besides, the system of borrowing wedding dresses was in vogue in those days.

Something blue was also essential for the wedding purpose. It is the idea of some people that as blue has been thought to be the colour of fidelity, a bride should put it on as a token for the line of her husband. A bride usually wears white dress which also, is thought to be a symbol of virginity. A widow marrying again, should not put on white dress.

Flowers and decorations :

Bay leaves and seasonable flowers are used largely in the bouquets and the church decorations, and flowers are sometime used in the dresses worn by the guests. Rosemaries are also used in some cases for decorating the church. These herbs probably used as medical precaution, their powerful scent being considered to be a preventive of infection which was a very potent danger when any large collection of people took place in the wedding place.

Gloves at wedding :

During the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries specially in the cold countries gloves at a fashionable marriage ceremony,

were an indispensible item. A clergyman is learnt to have refused to perform his duty, if he were not presented with a pair of gloves in addition to his remuneration, for the service rendered by him. Wedding gloves being white, show the symbol of fidelity.

Displaying the presents :

It is often arranged that the wedding presents be on show at the time of reception.

Duties and obligations relating to marriage :

The birde will be married according to the rites and rituals of the church she has chosen. There are no grades of marriage in the church, and the minister will see to it that, whatever setting may be given to the ceremony, the service itself is reverent and dignified. It is largely for the bride herself to determine what that setting shall be.

The marriage service :

The wedding ceremony is a religious service. Some churches regard it as a sacrament.

The betrothal service :

The bride is sometimes met by the clergyman or the clergy at the west door of the church. She and her father are escorted down the aisle. She proceeds on the right hand of her father, and the congregation stand. The clergyman moves to the chancel steps, and the bride's father places his daughter on the left of the bridegroom. The chief bride's maid stands beside her or on a short space behind her. Her opposite member should be the best-man. If there are bride's maids, they stand behind the chief bride's maid.

The father or the nearest male relative of the bride remains for the time, being standing at her left-hand side.

The clergyman begins the service. He comes to the point where he asks the man :

"Wilt thou have this woman to thy wedded wife, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony? Wilt thou love her, comfort her, honour, and keep her in

sickness and in health ; and, forsaking all other, keep thee only unto her so long as ye both shall live" ?

The man shall answer' "I will".

The clergyman then says to the woman :

"Wilt thou have this man to thy wedded husband, to live together after God's ordinance in the holy estate of Matrimony? Wilt thou obey him, and serve him, love, honour, and keep him in sickness and in health ; and, forsaking all other, keep thee only to him. so long as ye both shall live"?

The woman shall answer, "I will".

Then the clergyman says, "Who giveth this woman to be married to this man" ?

The father of the bride says. "I do".

According to some school at the time of solemnization of marriage a psalm or hymn is sung, and during this time the clergyman turns and walks slowly to the altar. The bride and bridegroom rise and foilow. They kneel at the Communion rail for the prayer that follows. The congregation also kneels.

They rise for the reading of the Scripture. With another hymn, followed by the benediction, the service ends.

The custom is becoming popular of having photographs of wedding taken at the church door, both on entering and leaving the church.

Then they sign the marriage Register. The service is then over.

Exchange of ring takes place during marriage ceremony of the Christians. It is a usual custom to put the ring on the fourth finger of the bride's left hand. of course, opinions vary as to why this finger should have been chosen from the rest. A prosaic reason behind use of this particular finger is that the left hand being commonly less used than the right one, would be a safer depository for the ring. A more poetic reason is that use of wedding ring on the fourthfinger, was because of of the old belief that an artery ran direct from this finger to heart which it was supposed, was the fouantin of all affection

The wedding feast :

A meal is a meal; and, by a strange coincidence, one wedding meal is much the same as another. Toast for the bride and bridegroom is proposed during the wedding feast.

The cutting of the wedding cake :

It is the general custom to eat cakes as a token of binding agreement. At first the Romans introduced the custom in wedding ceremonies and later they brought it to elsewhere. Anglo Saxon ancestors are learnt to have often indulged in the ritual of breaking cakes in pieces and throwing tue crumbs over the heads of the bride and groom with the desire that the couple might prosper in their conjugal life and always have plenty to eat. These pieces were sometimes scrabled for by the unmarried guests to keep under their pillows at night to bring dreams of future marriage partners. Young girls even to day, practise almost the same ritual with small portions of wedding cakes handed down to the invitees or sent later to those who attended the ceremony.

Usually the wedding-cake is cut when all the guests have been received. It is done by the bride with the assistance of the bridegroom.

Sometimes it is performed after the meal, and this arragement is perhaps the best. In some cases it is served with wine and soft-drinks for a short toast. There is no need of speech-making at this time. It is sufficient that it be arranged that someone proposes quite simply "The health of the bride and the bride-groom". If it is desired to drink to the health of the bride's parents and the bridegroom's parents, it should be done without speeches.

Some obsolete customs :

At present many of old rituals relating to the wedding ceremony have fallen into disuse. As for instance, it may merit mention here that if a younger daughter should be married before her elder sisters, the older girls should have to dance barefoot at the time of reception held after the wedding ceremony. Once it was prevalent in some Christian society that

on the day after his marriage a bridegroom must run with a basket of heavy stones fastened on his back through the town or village where he lived. A troop of ridiculing young men would run after him in order to make sure that he did not drop the burden, until the bride should overtake him and kiss him.

Another very interesting ritual now died down, may be mentioned here. It was a ritual in which rose petals, or flowers were scattered very loosely on the ground before the newly married couple came out of the Church after the wedding ceremony. This was performed to prove that the future conjugal life of the newly married couple might always prove flower-strewn.

Rituals relating to death;

Funeral arrangements :

When a death occurs, the first thing to do is to get in touch with the doctor, if he is not already present. He will give a cerificate stating the cause of death.

The funeral undertaker must then be summoned. He will ask for the doctor's certificate and the title-deeds to the lair in the cemetery, if a lair is already in the possession of the family. If not, he is required to be authorised to purchase one.

If cremation is desired, he will make the arrangements with the officials of the crematorium for a cremation, two doctors' certificates are generally required.

There are three parties to be considered in fixing the date and time of the funerall the minister who is to conduct the funeral, the officials at the cemetery or the crematorium, and the undertaker himself, who has to make the arrangements.

The general funeral arrangements may be left in the hands of the undertaker. He will supply letters of invitation ; will put the funeral notice in the newspapers, arrange the necessary conveyances if required for the mourners, and see to all monetary disbursments. A good undertaker knows how to relieve the chief mourners of all difficulty or anxiety. The undertaker also arranges for flowers and meal.

Choice of grave-yard :

Many years ago, most people had a family grave. Two

wars, conditions of employment, and the housing shortage, have dispersed the people to such an extent, that now many of them are quite out of touch with old family burial ground.

If a person has any preference for the old burial place or another, he should give expression to it in any testamentary document he means to leave behind him. Wishes clearly stated in writing will be carried out. It is a help to the chief mourners to have such instruction. It saves all doubt or argument. If cremation is the wish of the testator, he should express it in writing.

Registration of death :

Deaths must be regstered within five days. The mode of registration is for the nearest relative, to go to the Registrar of Births, Mariages and Deaths of the district in which the death takes place and take the doctor's certificate with him. In the case of sudden death the police must be notified.

The Registrar delivers to the person registering the death, a certificate which is the authorisation for burial.

In registering the death, if there is an estate to be wound up, a second copy of the Registrar's certificate should be obtained to be given to the lawyer. A third may be required for an insurance compacy, if the deceased was insured.

The undertaker cannot register the death. It is to be done by the nearest relative of the deceased present at death, or, if none, any other relative or inmate of the house, in which the death takes place. The undertaker will advise in the matter.

Notifying friends :

If, for any reason, it is left to the parties themselves to put the funeral notice in the newpaper, the particulars should be stated clearly unless the person who has died was very old or very young, age is seldom mentioned. Newspaper notification is not possible now in each and every case.

It is not absolutely necessary to send out written invitations. Customs vary in different localities.

Offering of flowers :

Flowers meant to be offered by friends, should not be sent too soon. The shop should be given the time of the funeral and an appropriate card.

If a request has been made in the funeral notice for "No flowers", these should not be sent during the funeral.

Arrangements for hospitality :

It is customary in most districts, to ask the guists especially those from a distance, to return to the house for a meal. The custom of providing refreshments at funerals is gradually dying out. Business friends and neighbours who come to pay their respect, do not usually return to the house after the funeral.

Attending the funeral :

Mourning clothes are not so usual as once they were, and many people do not put on mourning at all. Men wear black ties, often with lounge suits, and women a simple black dress. It is not customary to wear mourning bands after the funeral, and children do not wear mourning dress at all.

Some women go to the graveside, and some also go to the crematorium. The wife should not go. She should be taken up later privately to see the grave.

Relatives and friends go to the funeral in order of precedence, the nearest relatives in the first suitable vehicle, and are first also in the short walk in the cemetery to the graveside. The elder son should stand at the head of the coffin, the second son at the foot.

A death in a house is usually announced by the drawing of curtains.

They should be drawn back after the funeral is over.

When the friends returned after the cremony at the graveside or in the crematorium, an effort should be made to greet them with cheerfulness.

Acknowledgements :

It is desirable to put some acknowledgement of flowers and services rendered in the local newspapers.

Letter of condolence :

It is not at all easy to write a letter of condolence to a bereaved person. It is easier to express one's sympathy in flowers. Yet there are times when one must express oneself in writing- The letter should be written without delay.

Facing the future :

At a military funeral, the soldiers follow the gun-carriage at low march, with arms reversed, and playing a lament.

When they return from the ceremony at the graveside, they step out at a quick march, with arms at the slope, and playing a lively tune.

In civilian life many Christians have to follow the same pattern. They cannot keep looking back and have to go forward. The period of mourning should not be unduly prolonged. whether one feels disposed for it or not, after two months one should be taking up life again, as fully as one can.

Anniversaries :

Birth, marriage, and death anniversaries are observed by many Christians.

Other rituals relating to birthday :

A child likes to feel important, and a birthday-party ministers to his sense of importance and makes him more sure of himself.

For if anyone is entertaining children, they are best seated while eating and kept "under his hand",as it were.

Twenty first Birthday parties :

These are most informal, and simply take the form of passing a pleasant evening suited to the age of the guests. The only formality to be observed is that of proposing the health of the person concerned.

CONCLUSION

I

The present society of West Bengal has constituents of the Hindus, Muslims, Christians and Tribals. Many of the Muslims and Christians are converts from the Hindus. Basically the society is marked by a preponderance of Hindu culture which has been handed down from a hoary past through generations of inter-mixtures of many ethnic groups. Hindu culture crystallized by the middle ages when Muslims began to pour into India. The Muslims came here, spread out into different parts of the country in course of six or seven centuries and inter-mingled with the Hindus, many of whom were converted into Muslims. Subsequently came the European Christians who set up a power here and converted many Hindus who became Indian Christians. Though different religions have segmented the population into Hindus, Muslims and Christians, the culture of this country is basically Hindu. For, the common culture here is represented, to cite one ingredient, by many rituals which were noticed in Hindu ages or are existing at present in Hindu society.

Rituals, then, are a very important component of society. These rituals were originally expressions of an idea or fiction, of sentiments of sympathy or aversion, of religious or social bias, or supernatural beliefs or fears. But in course of time these hardened into "must's" or "must not's". Thus they have survived many centuries, thousands of scannings or criticisms. They have survived many changes of times and chains of governments or revolutions and even changes of religion. It has been clear, therefore, that sentiments behihd rituals are very hard to die. They are dear to the life existence of a society.

The present work is an endeavour to delve deep into

some of rituals that exist among Hindu, Muslim and Christian people who live side by side in W. Bengal villages. The Hindu society is the mother society and the converts of Muslims and Christians are only religious off-takes from the Hindus, but culturall they have much in common. Only the rituals have taken into consideration in this present work leaving out many items and "isms" in common heritage.

The present discourse includes a vast crop of ideas in regard to survival of Hindu rituals amidst the rites and rituals practised on account of observance of brith, childhood, puberty, marriage, death etc. along with some festivals, by the converts form Hindus to Muslims or Christians. For simplification and easy assessment, here were studied a limited number of families of the converted Muslims and Christians, who are found to follow the same rituals in the majority of the cases, as are prevalent among their co-religionists living elsewhere. More data could be added and multiplied but they were avoided as similar rituals were noticed everywhere among the converts. So, for the sake of brevity additions of too many similar data have been left out. It may be said without contradiction that the aspects noted here represent in a large measure the state of rituals followed by the Muslim or Christian converts elsewhere in other parts of W. Bengal. All the items have been scanned and collated from a large series of rites and rituals studied. Though the author thinks that more information and more specific places are necessary to have a generalised idea, yet this throws sufficient light upon the behaviourist pattern of the group of people concerned.

In order to attain a quantitative estimation and analysis, the author has taken recourse to simple statistical concepts for the preparation of relevant statistical details, with a view to illustrating the particular points of coincidence of similarity or difference, as the case may be. As a matter of fact, these examples have brought out some very revealing correlations and historical sequences, or departure from the social norms. With the help of these examples attempts have been made to

find out the correlation existing, if any, amongst the Hindus Muslims, Christians, and their converts.

Various aspects, such as, history of conversion, castes, occupational patterns etc. have been considered, because of the fact that the frequencies of occurrence of rites and rituals are directly connected with these factors.

For the study of the various socio-religious rituals referred to here and relating to the convert-families of the places under study, the representative samples of the orthodox Hindus, Muslims and Christians have been taken into consideration.

In most of the cases the socio- religious rites and ritualso of different convert-groups cannot be differentiated very clearly. This clearly indicates the continuity of rituals from generation to generation, with minor changes that are due to change of religious faith.

The main reasons for survival of Hindu rites and rituals among the Muslims and Christians are not far to seek. These were (a) prolonged social contact with the Hindus, (b) Hindu wives, and (c) conversion, Many instances have been incorporated in this book to show how each of these causes had contributed largely to weave a fabric of Indian society whose warp and woof consists of Hindu rituals and ideas behind these rituals. The fabric may take any jue of any religion, but its basic constituent of the warp and woof remains to be the Hindu rituals.

A look at the census reports of the past hundred years will convince one that the Muslims in Bengal were a minority in the beginning but in course of time their number has multiplied. Ultimately they outnumbered the Hindus, and a partition of Bengal became a fait accomple. The society of Bengal has been partly Hindu and partly Muslims. This had natural repercussions due to each other's long contacts on culture, aspirations, rural cohesion, common occupation and social services. The rituals that were in existence in parental Hindu families were borrowed, in

cases in a modified from, by their converted posterety. These rituals thus survived. There ensued thus a process of territorial co-existence of rituals. This process could have been halted if there had been no Hindus around or in their midst.

We may, therefore, state that the process of conversion by the Mollahs or Padres was slow and superficial. Many converts were allured to non-Hindu religions of Islam or Christianity for a variety of reasons but equally many of their unconverted relatives lived side by side and had daily mutual social intercourse. The converts changed their faith but only superficially. They had no depth of conviction while they changed faith. Their conversion was only in name but they remained the same in culture, dress, dialect, manners and customs. Being highly illiterate, inspite of embracing religion of other faith, they never tried to follow their religious guidances in toto. As a result, both the Mollahs and the Clergymen being at last unsuccessful in their missionary activities to convert the illiterate Hindu folk fully were constrained to adjust mutually by allowing them to observe Hindu Socio-religious manners and customs, rites and rituals. As such, the Hindu rituals are noticed to survive still to-day among the converts.

Why, then, is there such a phenomenon ? The Hindu rituals are age-old, many ganerations old. These observances have become a part of the self or of the society and it becomes impossible for the converts to eschew them only because these are Hindu in form or in outlook. For, these rituals were once attuned to love and emotion of the people before conversion and as such inseparable from the people themselves. Such emotions transcend the bounds of religion when the rituals are invoked in moments of emotional upsurge like pleasures of marriage, child-birth, social festivities, folk songs or moments of deep despair like death. daughter's separation, diseases etc. So rituals are mere religious practices.

Besides sentimentalism, the rituals get associated with social and economic surroundings. Once a ritual gets into currency, it becomes intertwined with the economic living of many a people around and hence it has become a social necessity. Thus, a man may change his religion, but the ritual or custom with which he was born does not change. Such is the virility of rituals. In course of times, however, Society patriarchs explain these rituals as incumbent necessities and state the meanings behind such rituals under such circumstances. Thus rituals, getting scientific explanations in course of time, gain a lingering longivity.

One more cause has greatly contributed to the survival of the Hindu rituals among converts. It was the influence of the Hindu wives or the contact of Hindu women with neighbouring converted women. Women folk are responsible for many rituals in all societies. It is only too natural that the Hindu women, converted to Islam or Christianity, when married to a Muslim or Christian, wield mighty hold over their husbands or children and in course of time they introduce the Hindu rituals in some form or other in the families or their husbands. This had been true in cases of harems of the kings or Jagirdars as well as common folk. In this way, the Hindu rituals found their way into the societies of converted Muslims and converted Christians.

These and many other reasons go a long way to explain the survival of the Hindu rituals among converts.

III

The study of survival of Hindu rituals among the converted Muslims and Christians has a greater importance than the mere academic research of one facet of the present day Bengalee society of converts. It has a great significance from the point of view of Applied Anthropology and Social Research. This work has indicated that the existence of Hindu rituals among converts takes

a way the edge of tooth of eommunal tension and national disintegration.

It is an undeniable fact that religion segments the society vertically and this segmentation, in course of time, broadens the gap or difference between the communities. This, in course of time, in many cases, threatens the national solidarity and integration, fanning out conflicts and tensions. Religious behaviours manifested in rites and ceremonies are some aspects of a given culture, i. e. part of totality or whole. So differences in such parts or minor items of the traits, should not be emphasised to disturb the normal way of relationship pattern.

It has been observed in course of study that the converts from Hindus to Muslims and Christians specially those who are not in touch with fanatic Mollahs or Padrees (clergymen) but living amongst their Hindu neighbours in the rural or semi-urban areas, have been found to retain some rites and rituals practised by their Hindu fore-fathers a century or more back, and some of these types of rituals were found to be observed with some deviation from their traditional Hindu patterns, i. e. in a blended way of Hindu-Muslim and Hindu-Christian mode of observance of rituals, showing a little regard for their traditional Hindu patterns. Some converted families of Muslims or Christians show extreme orthodox tendency towards observance of Muslim or Christian rituals, whereas in some cases, some converts were found to observe the rituals deviating from the Hindu, Muslim and Christian modes of observance, and that was perhaps due to urbanisation and modern outlook. Their rituals are in a process of secularisation. Of course, observance of socio-religious rituals varies from caste to caste among the Hindus and even from place to place. In some cases, the socio-religious rituals were found to be observed most briefly, and in some cases most elaborately just to accommodate them with time and space.

From the fore-going study it has been noticed that in the midst of diversities of religions, the existence of Hindu

or Hindu-like rituals among the converted Muslims and Christians goes a long way to weld a unity among people of different faiths. It has often been found that in India communal tension is bred and engineered by politicians for political gains of the leaders or of the parties. As a result many innocent lives have been slaughtered for no fault of their own. Such things appened for political ends, but the ignition was through religion. The battle cry was either, "Islam in danger" or "Hinduism in peril". This "jehad" or "crusade" has always been very short lived, because there exists no real cause for such battle cries, and the contending societies—Hindus and Muslims or Christians have many things in common.

The present work has revealed enough that the mutual participations in and observance of Hindu socio-religious rituals help minimise the communal tension between the Hindus and the Muslims. Thus, where the Hindus and Muslims live together there both the communities during times of communal riots had resisted communal mischief-mongers and lived in peace. In Kulinpara undern Khardah police station of 24-Parganas where Muslims live amongst the Hindus, the communal riot which flared up in the adjacent localities In Titagar, could not affect those Muslim families as they live with the Hindus quite in friendship.

It has also been noticed during the course of studies and observations that in the areas where the Hindus and the Muslims live in an isolated way in two adjacent areas with least respect for each other's socio-religious festivities and rituals, communal riots generally take place there. Communal riots were found the break out in Khidirpur, Rajabazar, Entally, Kalabagan etc. In Calcutta, Kamarhati, Titagar and Jagaddal in 24-Parganas as the Muslims live here quite separately and have no mutual participation in each other's socio-religious rituals. But this had never been the case in the rural areas of West Bengal where the Muslims and Hindus live together and participarte in each other's socio-religious activities.

On enquiries the informants have affirmed that different communities living together in a composite village or in adjacent villages and participating commonly in socio-religious festivals and observing common or similar rituals find no socio-economic cause for which they should fight against each other. In the last analysis it transpires that the survival of Hindu rituals in the societies of converts and common participation in Hindu Muslim-Christian festivals by villages, though unable to remove communal riots altogether, can minimise communal tension.

This study therefore, fruitfully suggests that all lovers of peace and tranquility in society and administration should not tamper with the Hindu rituals in cenvert-societies with or without deliberate perversity.

Towards the seventieth of the twentieth century when the writer had been investigating into the rituais of the present day society, he noticed another feature. It is that the rituals of the old society, bote of the Hindus and the converts, were undergoing changes or were becoming obsolete with greater urbanisation and metanorphosis of the present-day society. Sometimes the old rituals were being modified, leaving only traces of the old ones. There are now changes about. So the Hindu society or for the matter of fact the societies of the converts cannot but be affected by those changes in the neighbourhood.

It was noticed that the elderly people amongst the chnverts were found more desirous of observing or maintaining the ritual of their Hindu fore-fathers. Many of them, specially of the Muslims, have retained their old Hindu, names, such as, Gopal, Nandalal, Ramanath, Bholanath etc. and the people retaining these Hindu names were found to be very elderly, whereas amongst the young converts cases of retention of Hindu names were few and far between. Of course, th Christain converts, irrespective of age-group almost 100%, were found to observe Hindu naming system and retain names of Hindu gods and goddesses, even after their conversion to Christianity

As a result of increase in population and changes in occupational patterns and modern outlook, urbanisation and industrialisation, many people of different religions are not sticking to their traditional socio-religious patterns of rituals in this modern dynamic society. In modern society particularly in the urbanised localities, observance of conventional rites and rituals is not possible, due to various reasons. The old traditional pattern follows ancient customs, rites and rituals, while the modern pattern has developed a new outlook and philosophy of life to cope with the changing circumstances.

After-birth pollution is hardly observed now-a-days, as most of the delivery cases are attended to in hospitals where the rituals like Chhaya Shasthi' etc. cannot be observed. Likewise, after-death people of ultra-modern outlook and office-goers hardly observe any rituals like prohibition of wearing shoes made of leather and sitting on a mat of Kush grass etc. Now-a-days, many Hindu women are found not to observe pollution during menstrual period. In old Hindu societies and the conservative families, menstrual pollution was observed ceremonially, and a menstruating woman was not even allowed to enter the kitchen, or take part in religious performances. But now-a-days, these practices are hardly observed, as in the case of the Muslims and the Christians.

In earlier times, and even till the end of the 19th Century and upto early 20th Century, if a Hindu girl married a Muslim or a Christian youngman and vice-versa, the whole Hindu family was made outcaste. If any one of a Hindu family would take water or food from a Muslim or Christian family he was made an outcaste. But now-a-days, due to modern outlook, those ideas are on the wane. Now-a-days, there had been a good number of Hindu-Muslim and Hindu-Christian marriages which could not make the Hindu families concerned outcaste. Likewise now-a-days many Muslims are found to take part in Hindu fairs and festivals. This was one time deemed to be very tersricted and profane in their fanatic idea.

Inspite of all these modern tendencies to do away with the rituals of religion and caste system, it has not been possible to ensure total substitution of the old traditional society by the new society.

Thus the caste and religious values are practically maintained for the most part by the old traditional society, while appreciable variations have taken place in the new society with modern outlook. Yet, it is interesting to find that many socio-religious rituals have since been surviving amongst many Indian Muslims and Christians. Besides, many worships of Hind deities and folk-deities are also commonly held or participated in together by many Hindu, Muslim and Christian communities in India. The Hindu Muslim and Christian societies are thus socio-religiously influenced by the rites and rituals and cultures of each other. Many Muslims are found to offer puja to the Hindu temples, Likewise, many orthodox Hindu Brahmins or Pundits (learned people) are found to offer Puja or Sirni to the Muslim Pirs and Dargaha. Many Christians also revere some Hindu festivities and observe some Hindu rites and rituals.

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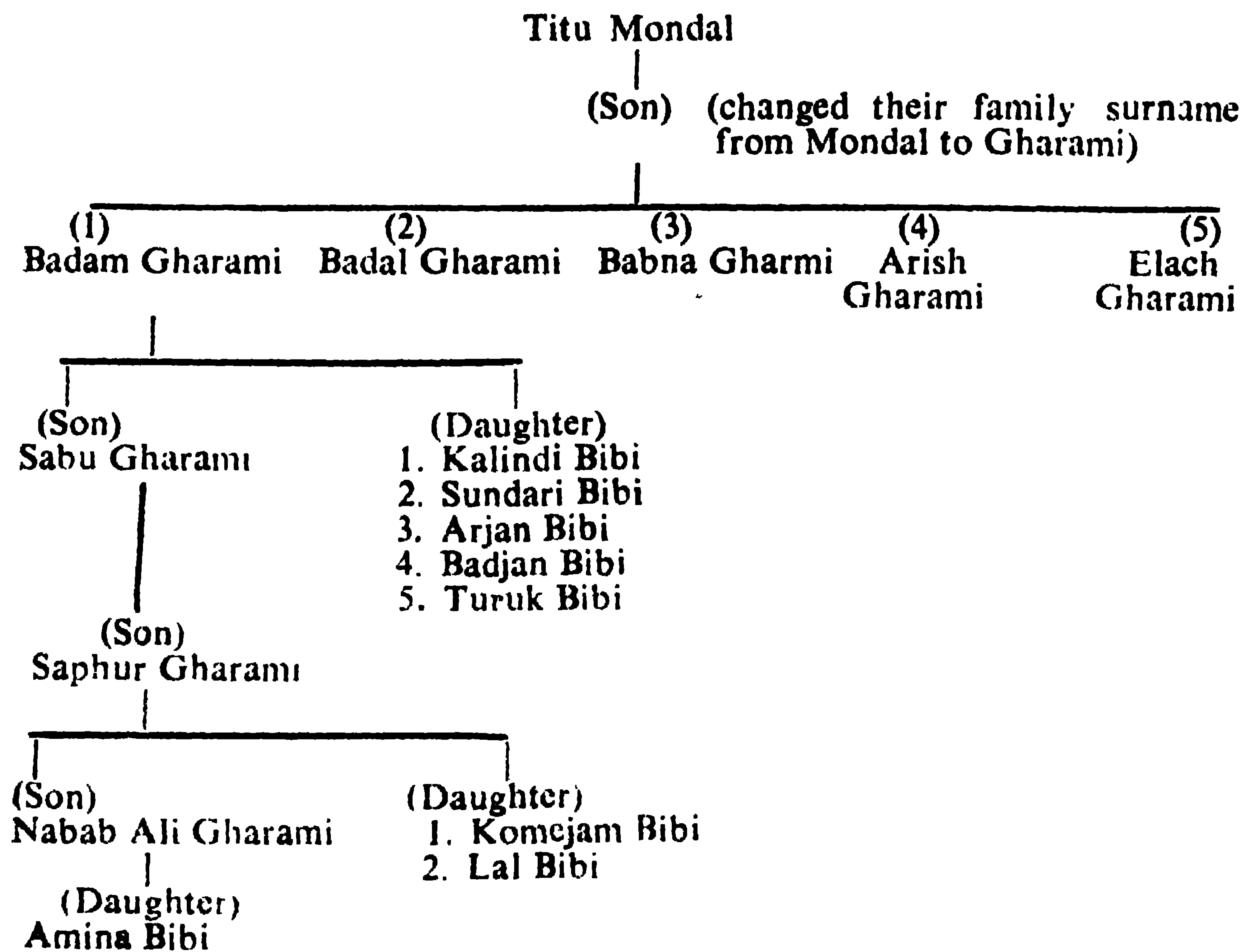
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APPENDIX—A

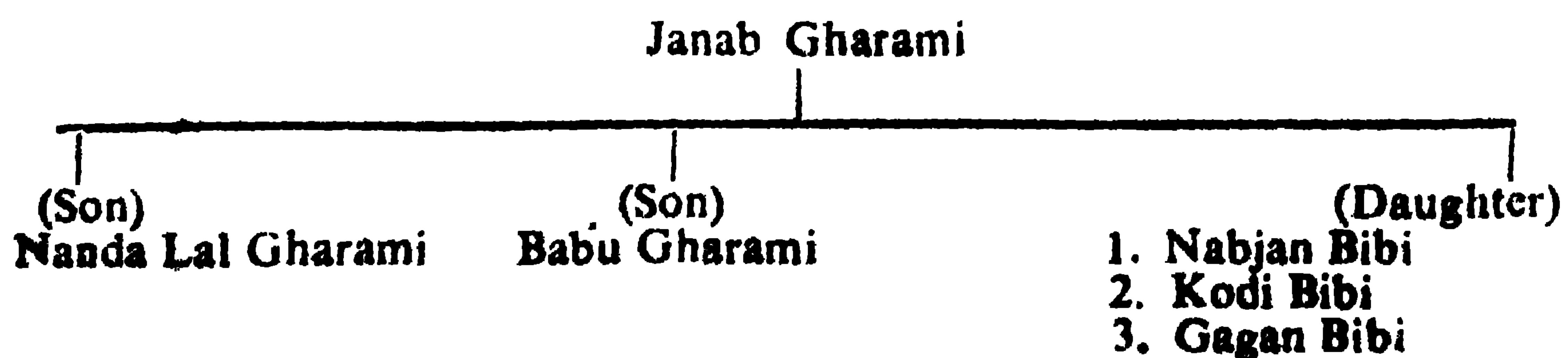
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Geneology of a few converted Muslim families.

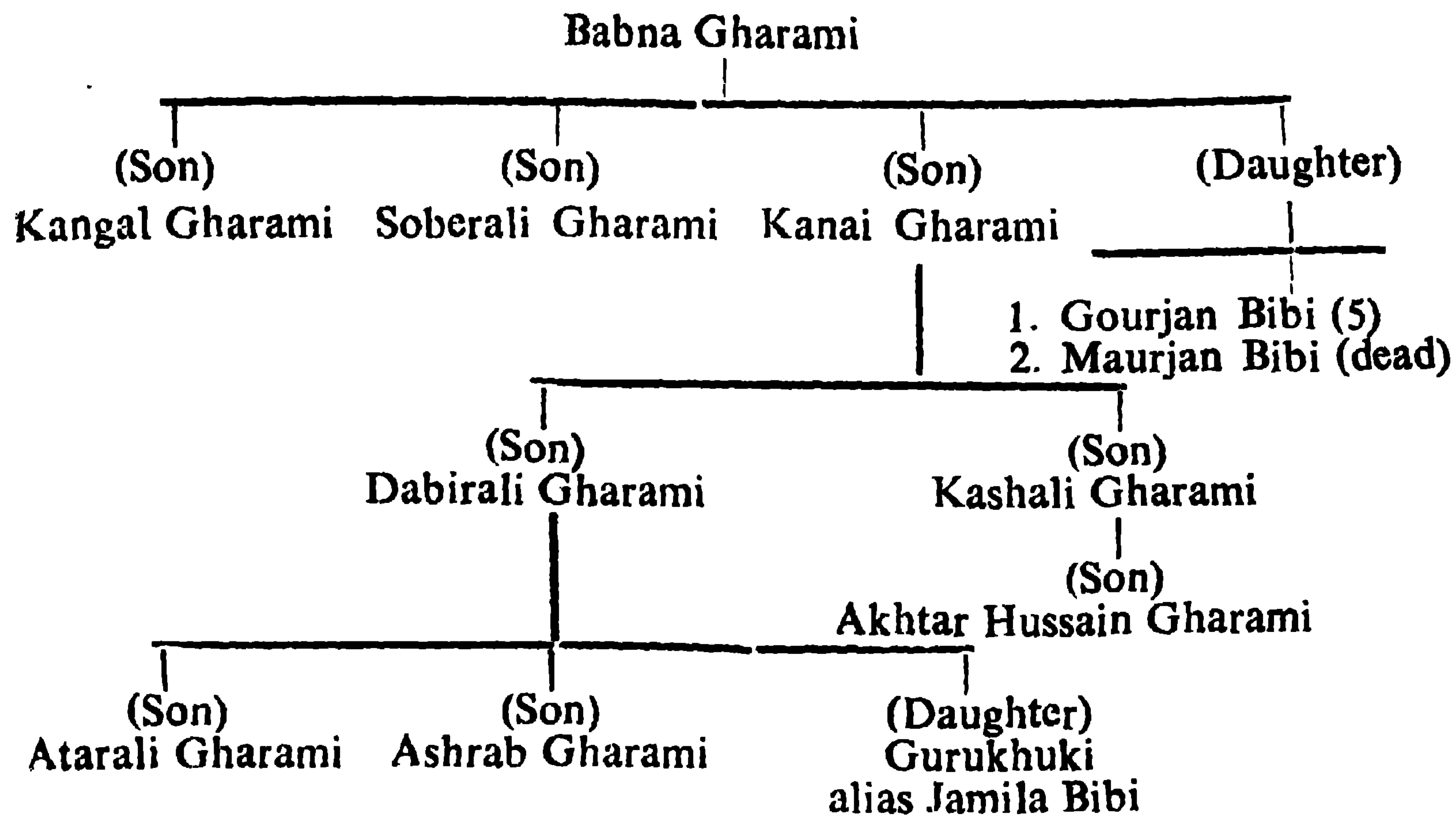
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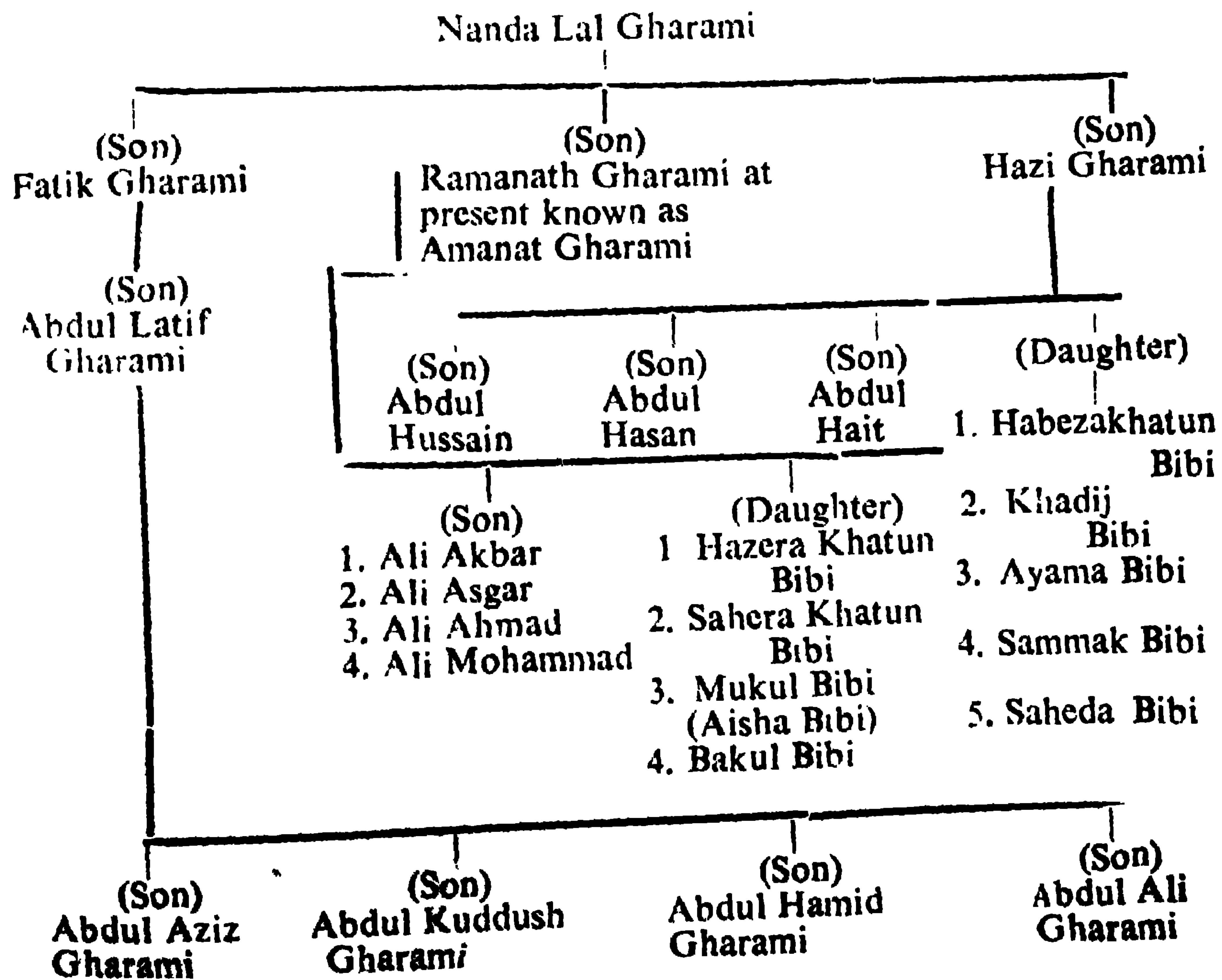
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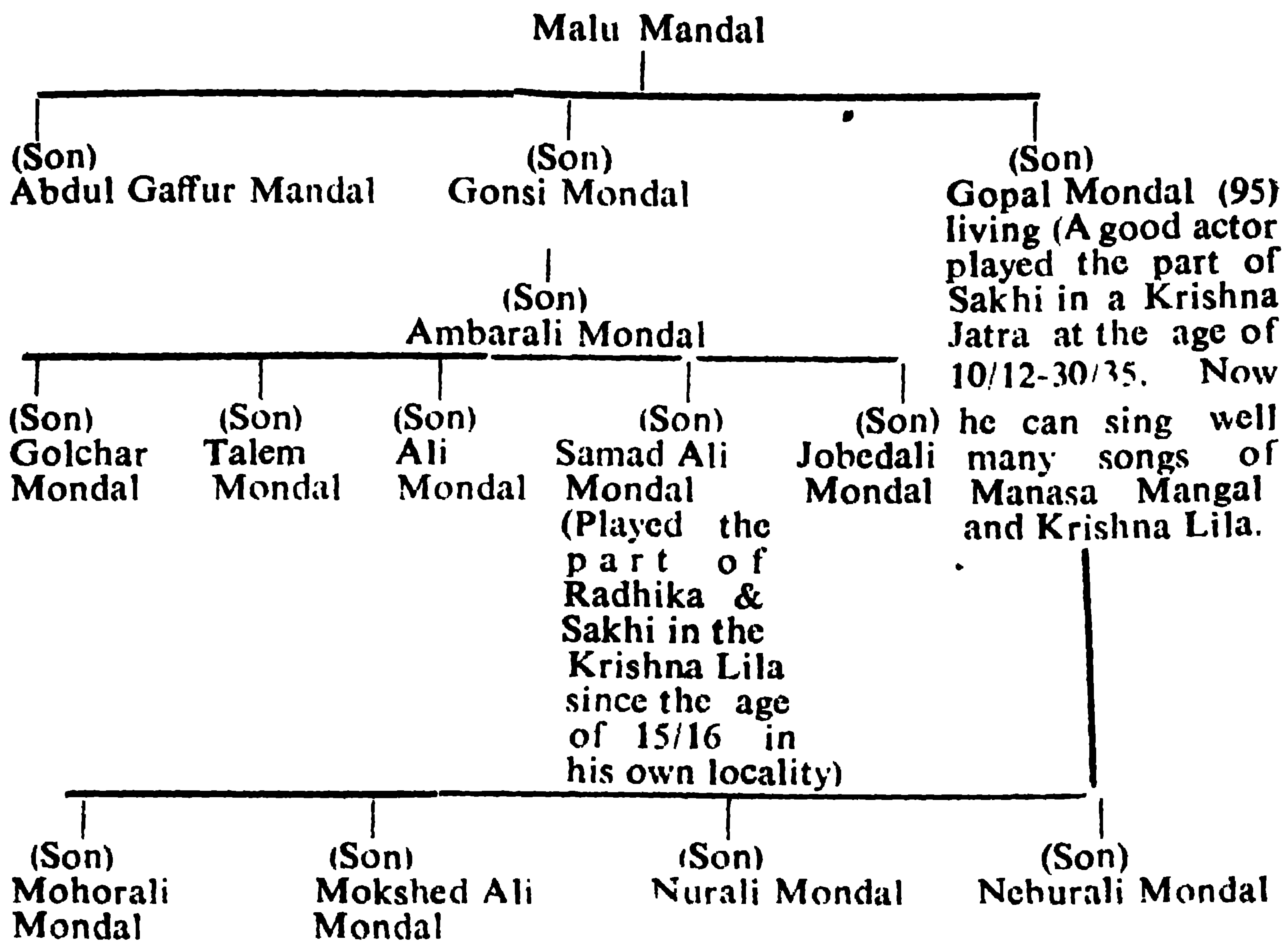
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Babna Gharami
(Son)
Kangal Gharami
(Son)
Soberali Gharami
(Son)
Kanai Gharami
(Daughter)
1. Gourjan Bibi (5)
2. Maurjan Bibi (dead)
(Son)
Dabirali Gharami
(Son)
Kashali Gharami
(Son)
Akhtar Hussain Gharami
(Son)
Atarali Gharami
(Son)
Ashrab Gharami
(Daughter)
Gurukhuki
alias Jamila Bibi

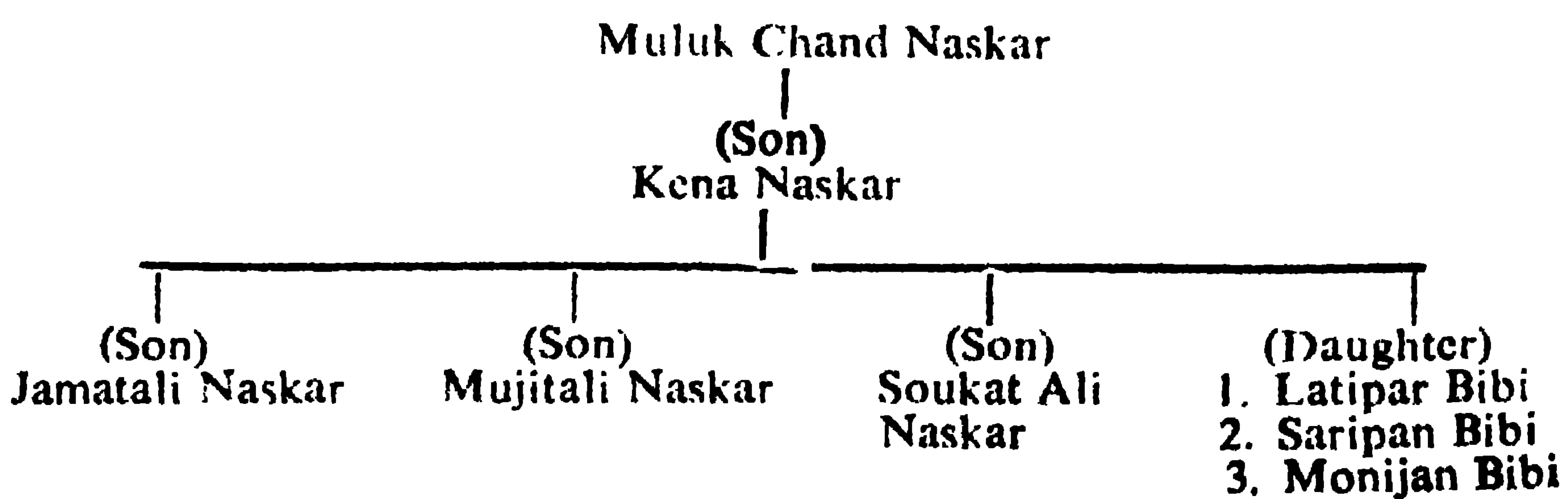
[d]


Nanda Lal Gharami
(Son)
Fatik Gharami
(Son)
Ramanath Gharami at
present known as
Amanat Gharami
(Son)
Hazi Gharami
(Son)
Abdul Latif
Gharami
(Son)
Abdul
Hussain
(Son)
Abdul
Hasan
(Son)
Abdul
Hait
(Daughter)
1. Habezakhatun
Bibi
2. Khadij
Bibi
3. Ayama Bibi
4. Sammak Bibi
5. Saheda Bibi
(Son)
1. Ali Akbar
2. Ali Asgar
3. Ali Ahmad
4. Ali Mohammad
(Daughter)
1 Hazera Khatun
Bibi
2. Sahera Khatun
Bibi
3. Mukul Bibi
(Aisha Bibi)
4. Bakul Bibi
(Son)
Abdul Aziz
Gharami
(Son)
Abdul Kuddush
Gharami
(Son)
Abdul Hamid
Gharami
(Son)
Abdul Ali
Gharami

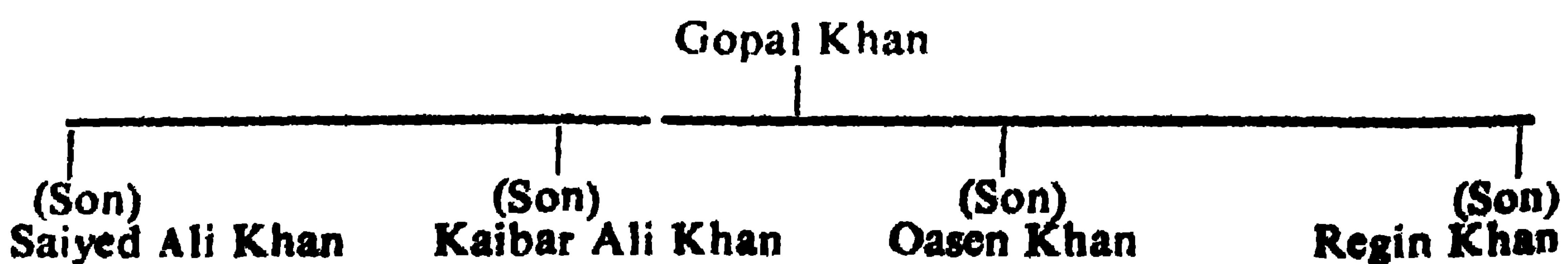
[e]


Malu Mandal
(Son)
Abdul Gaffur Mandal
(Son)
Gonsi Mondal
(Son)
Gopal Mondal (95) living (A good actor played the part of Sakhi in a Krishna Jatra at the age of 10/12-30/35. Now he can sing well many songs of Manasa Mangal and Krishna Lila.
(Son)
Ambarali Mondal
(Son)
Golchar Mondal
(Son)
Talem Mondal
(Son)
Ali Mondal
(Son)
Samad Ali Mondal (Played the part of Radhika & Sakhi in the Krishna Lila since the age of 15/16 in his own locality)
(Son)
Jobedali Mondal
(Son)
Mohorali Mondal
(Son)
Mokshed Ali Mondal
(Son)
Nurali Mondal
(Son)
Neburali Mondal

[f]


Muluk Chand Naskar
(Son)
Kena Naskar
(Son)
Jamatali Naskar
(Son)
Mujitali Naskar
(Son)
Soukat Ali Naskar
(Daughter)
1. Latipar Bibi
2. Saripan Bibi
3. Monijan Bibi

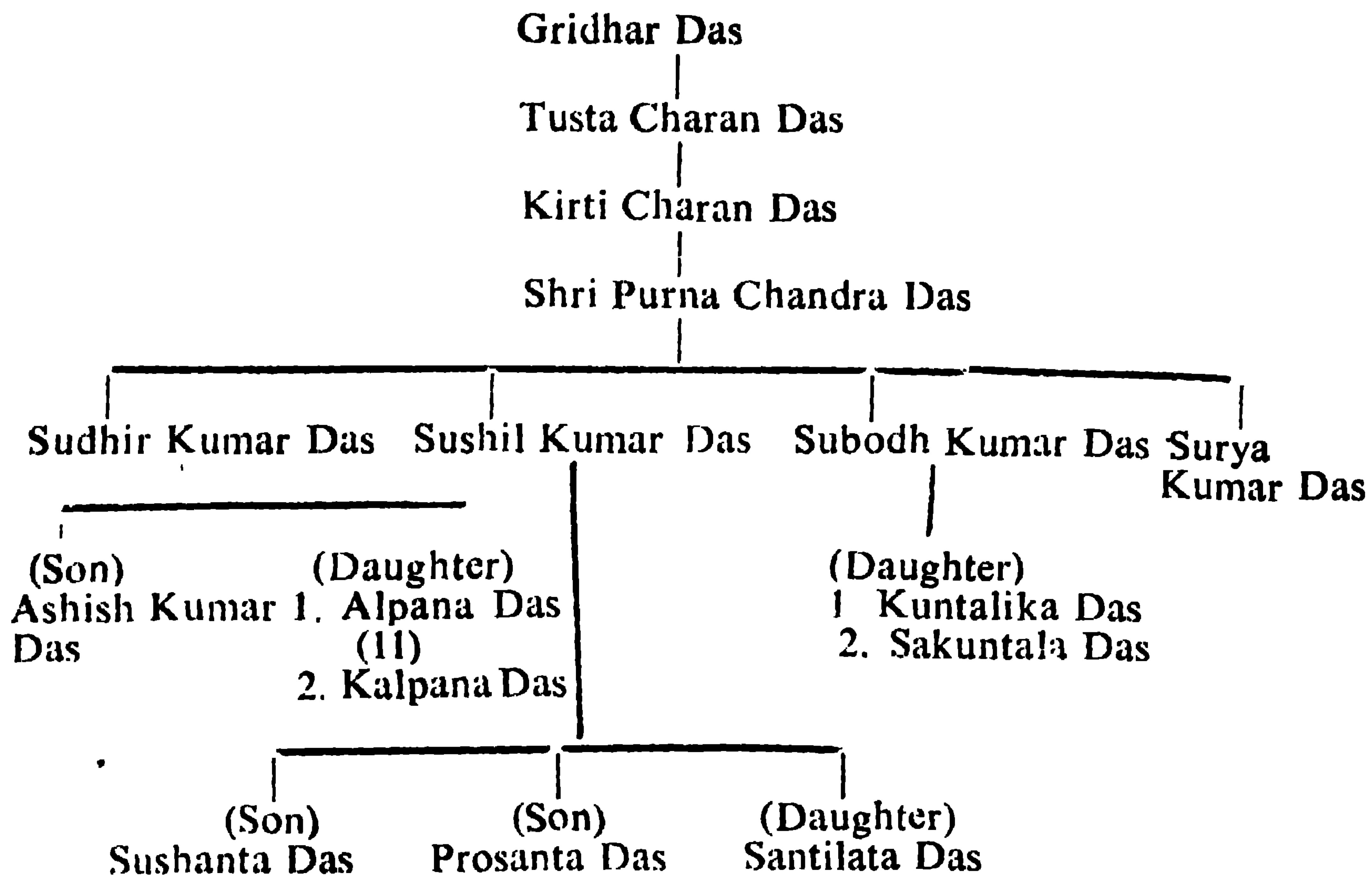
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Gopal Khan
(Son)
Saiyed Ali Khan
(Son)
Kaibar Ali Khan
(Son)
Oasen Khan
(Son)
Regin Khan

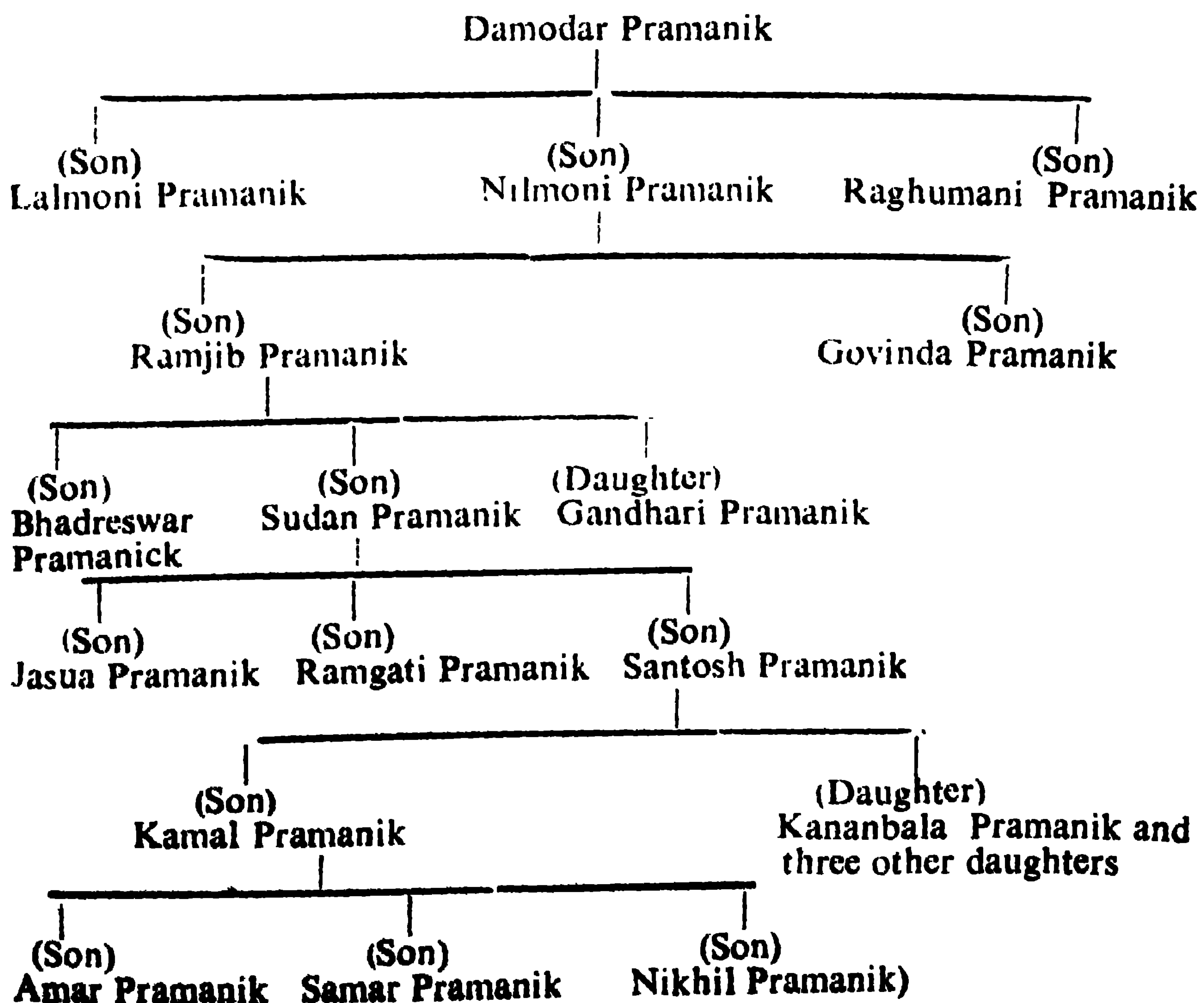
II

Geneology of a few converted Christian families

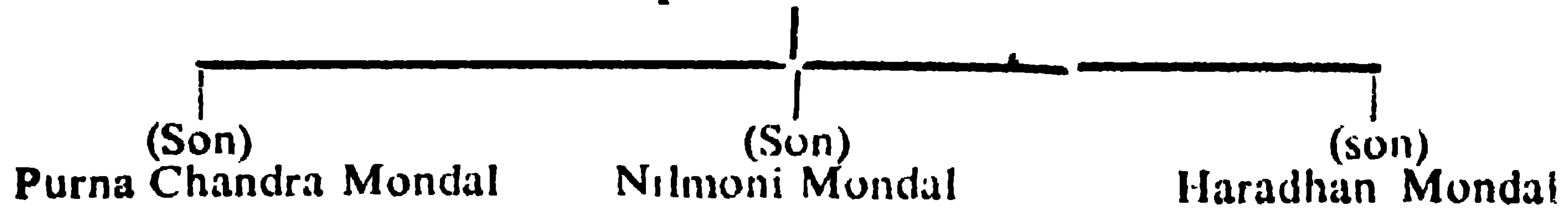
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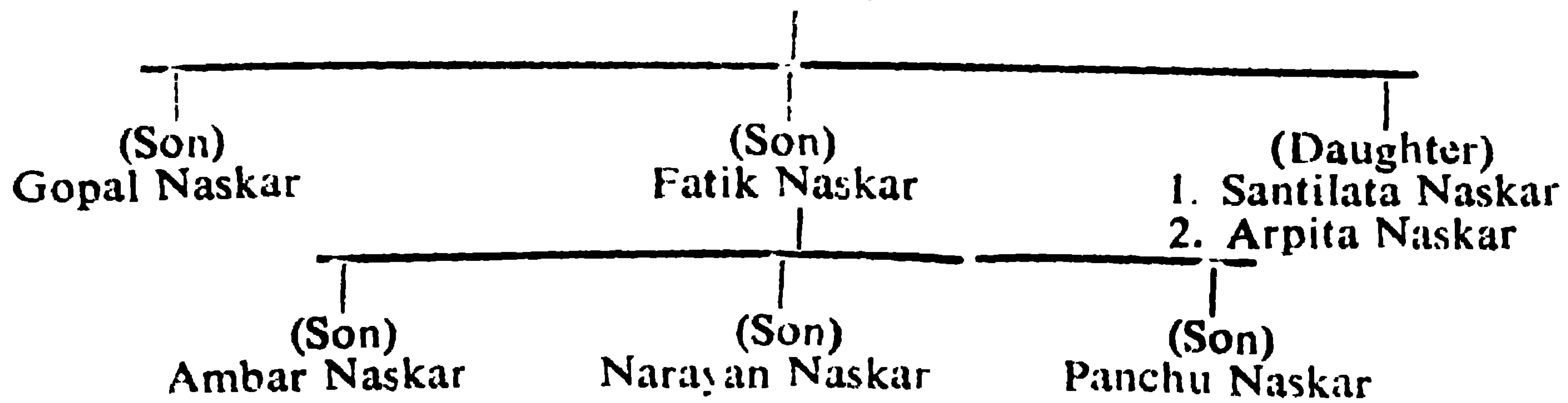
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[c]


Gopi Nath Mondal
(Son)
Purna Chandra Mondal
(Son)
Nilmoni Mondal
(son)
Haradhan Mondal

[d]


Kena Naskar
(Son)
Gopal Naskar
(Son)
Fatik Naskar
(Daughter)
1. Santilata Naskar
2. Arpita Naskar
(Son)
Ambar Naskar
(Son)
Narayan Naskar
(Son)
Panchu Naskar

APPENDIX—B

I

Codes of Manu regarding Hindu marriage.

Verse IV : A girl who is not on the maternal or paternal side Sapinda or Sagotra of Brahmin may be selected as a fit bride who is deemed to be pure for giving birth to a son.

Sapinda has been explained as blood-connection with seven-generations up or downwards. Sagotra means, belonging to the same Kul (clan), within fourteen generations.

Verse V : In choosing a bride one should keep alo of from generations within the prohibited circle, even when the bride belongs to a family possessing cattle, goats, sheep, paddy, etc.

Verse VI : One should not establish matrimonial relationship with such a family devoid of ceremonial rites, male children and knowledge of the Vedas. Such a family in which members are too much hairy or suffer from diseases like piles, consumption, indigestion, epilepsy, leucorrhoea on leprosy, should be avoided in selecting bride.

Verse VII : One should not choose a girl as a bride having hair of brown colour or more than five fingers. A sickly, brown-eyed, bald-headed or too much hairy girl should not be selected for wedding purpose.

Verse VIII : One should not wed as one's wife, a girl named after stars, rivers, hills, birds, snakes, slaves, or outcaste. A girl having her name connected with something terrible should not be selected as a birde.

One should marry a girl having perfect limbs, sweet name, and a gait like that of a duck or elephant. Further, a girl who is fair and delicate in body and is neither too broad-toothed should be selected as a bride.

Verse X : A girl having no uterine brother should not be selected as bride, because a wiseman fears that a son born to such a wife will have to offer oblations.

A girl having her pedegree unknown should not be chosen for wedding purpose and be avoided as 'Illegitimate' for fear of breach of religious injunctions.

Verse XI : Dwijas (twice-born) should preferably marry within their own caste. If driven by lust or passion they wish to marry again, the following order should be observed.

Verse XII : A Brahmin should marry a girl belonging to Brahmin, down to Sudra. A Kshatriya may marry Kshatriya, Vaishya or Sudra. A Vaishya may marry Vaishya and Sudra. But a Sudra should marry a Sudra only. Of course, history does not provide many instances of Brahmins and Kshatriyas marrying Sudra girls, excepting in times of crisis. But being driven by lust if a Brahmin, Kshatriya or Vaishya marries a girl belonging to Sudra caste, he is sure to degenerate into Sudra along with the sons and grand-sons born of her.

Verse XVI : If a Brahmin, at first, does not marry within his own caste, but choses a Sudra girl as his wife and cohabit with her, he goes to hell. When such a wife begets her children, his right as a Brahmin is set at naught.

Verse XVII : A Brahmin's Sudra wife may perform religious rites wonderfully well. She may offer oblations to the departed ancestors or be hospitable to a degree. But none of her offerings are accepted by gods or departed souls for whom they are meant, nor can her family go to heaven as a result of such virtuous deeds.

Verse XXI : According to Shastras, eight forms of marriages are in force amongst the Hindus. These marriages are—(1) Brahma, (2) Daiba (ordained by fate), (3) Arja, (4) Prajapatya, (5) Asura, (6) Gandharba, (7) Rakshasha, and worst of all, (8) Paishacha.

Verse XXII : A Brahmin may marry according to the first six forms. The Kshatriya may be allowed to follow the last four forms, whereas in case of a Vaishya or a Sudra, the three forms such as, Ashura, Gandharba and Paishacha are permissible.

Verse XXIII : In case of a Brahmin the four forms of

marriage, i.e. Brahma, Daiba, Arya and Prajapatya are permissible. For the Kshatriyas only Rakshasa form and for Vaishya and Sudras, Ashura form is recommended.

Verse XLIII : Shastras permits to marry within the caste. But in case of marriage outside the caste, the following rules should be observed.

Verse XLIV : If a Brahmin marries at Kshatriya, the latter should catch hold of the arrow in the Brahmin's hand and not the hand itself.

But if a Vaishya is married to a Brahmin or Kshatriya, the bride shall have to hold a part of the cattle-driving stick in the groom's hand. In case, a Sudra is married to a Brahmin, a Kshatriya or a Vaishya, the bride shall have to catch the skirt of the cloth he has to put on.

Verse LI : The bride's father shall on no account receive money in lieu of his daughter's marriage. If he does so, he will be involved in a sin of selling his child. But in case of Sudra, bride-price is permissible.

Verse LIV : In some cases the groom's party is found to make voluntary offerings to the bride when such offering or gift is not appropriated by the bride's father but given to the daughter herself, it is free from the odium of sale price, because in such case, money is treated but a fitting gift for worshipping a maid.

Verse LV : Wishing the bride welfare, her father, brother, husband and brother-in-law shall give feasts to and adorn the bride with clothes and ornaments.

II

Modern marriage Legislation.
Hindu Marriage Act (Act No.25, 1955).

The Hindu Marriage Act relates to law of marriage amongst the Hindus, excepting Parsis, Christians, Jews and Muslims. This law applies to more than 80% of population of the country and this is a step in the direction of making one common

marriage law applicable to all the citizens of India. This Act prevents bigamy amongst the Hindus. According to this Act, the right of divorce is recognised for all Hindus married in any form whatsoever. The right of divorce is applicable in certain hard cases, where it becomes necessary on account of the changed economic, social and political conditions. Of course, the sanctity of marital tie of the Hindu society is maintained as far as practicable.

A Hindu marriage under this Act is deemed to be a sacramental marriage as distinguished from a civil marriage. This sacramental marriage means a marriage solemnised in accordance with, such as, customary rites and ceremonies of either party thereto, as are essential for such marriage. This marriage may be soleminsed between parties--(1) belonging to different religions namely Hindu, Buddha, Jaina or Sikha, (2) between parties both of whom belong to any of these religions and of the same caste or sub-caste or sect or different castes, sub-castes or sects.

Anuloma and Pratiloma Marriage : A marriage between a Brahmin male and a Kshatriya, Vaishya or Sudra female. Pratiloma marriage is a marriage between a Sudra male and a Brahmin, Kshatriya or Vaishya female. Pratiloma marriage is valid under this Act.

Marriage between Sagotra or Saman Pravara : This Act does not recognise the rule of Hindu law that a man cannot marry a girl of the same gotra or pravara. If a marriage between Sagotras or Saman Pravaras had been solemnised before passing of this Act, it would be treated as valid.

Eight forms of marriage : Smritis recognise eight types of marriage, such as, (1) Brahma, (2) Daiba, (3) Ashura, (4) Prajapatya, (5) Asura, (6) Gandharba, (7) Rakshasa, and (8) Paishacha. Of these the first four types are approved, but the last four forms do not enjoy approval. With the changes and progressive idea of Hindu society developed since the laws of Manu, Six of these eight forms sanctioned by Manu, have wholly disappeared. Only the Brahma, Asura and Gandharva

are now prevalent and the rest are obsolete. Of course, the marriage which is out of practice or obsolete is not necessarily prohibited by Hindu law.

Condition of valid marriage : If the following conditions are fulfilled the marriage between any two Hindus may be solemnised :—

(i) That neither party has a spouse living at the time of marriage.

(ii) That any one of the wedding party is not idiot or a lunatic at the time of marriage.

(iii) That at the time of marriage the bride has completed the age of fifteen and the groom eighteen.

(iv) That the parties are not within the degrees of prbhibited relationship unless the custom or usage governing each of them permits of a marriage between the two, i.e. they are not Sapindas of each other as referred to here.

(v) If the bride is found not have completed the age of fifteen years : in such case, the consent of the relevant guardians will be required.

Completion of marriage : Under this Act, no marriage will be complete and binding on the parties, unless and until it is solemnised in accordance with such customary rites and ceremonies of either party thereto, as are essential for such marrriage. It is the observance of the essential ceremonies that makes the marriage complete and irrevocable and give publicity to the marriage. Till the marriage is completed it is imperfect and revocable as well. The observance of customary rites and rituals relating to wedding ceremony has an important bearing upon the question of proper rights which arise from marriage. It is also found common in case of Muslims and Betrothal Christian marriage.

According to Hindu law, a betrothal ritual is nothing but a promise to give a girl in marriage. It is nothing but a wedding contract which is to be subsequently performed. No ceremonies are essential for the validity of a betrothal in case of a Hindu marriage. It is the essential duty on the part of Hindu

parents to give their minor and even major children to marriage. A betrothal contract is not void as being opposed to public policy, nor is the contract invalid on the ground that it is a marriage brokerage contract. It is also observed in case of the Muslim and Christian marriage.

Ceremonies relating to a Hindu marriage : (1) A Hindu marriage may be solemnised according to the customary rites and ceremonies of either of the wedding parties concerned : (2) the marriage becomes complete and binding when the ritual like Saptapadi, i.e. seventh-stop is taken.

Saptapadi and Laja Homa : A Hindu marriage is required to perform two essential rituals like, Sahtapadi and Laja Homa, which mean invocation before the consecrated fire. The performance of these two rites practically validates a Hindu marriage. In order to complete a marriage solemnised according to orthodox Hindu rites, the ritual of Saptapadi should essentially be completed. The ritual of Vivahahoma is also usually practised though its non-practice does not invalidate a marriage if otherwise completed.

The rituals like Homa and Saptapadi are treated to be essential if a marriage is performed in the Brahma, Asura or Gandharva form. In such cases, marriage becomes complete and binding if the seventhstep is taken. If not, it is treated as imperfect and revocable.

II

Now-a-days Shastric rituals are followed by different castes in different regions. Some earliest references in regard to observance of such rituals are discussed here.

1. **Nandimukha** : This ritual means performance of the ancestral worship or ancestral Sradh ceremonies, before the marriage ceremony is performed.

The reference of this ritual is found in Batsayana's Griha Sutra (1. 1. 24).

2. **Bar Barar** : It is performed either in accordance with

Shastra or Striachar varies from caste to caste which or community to community. In some regions, the groom is welcomed by the women with a welcoming winnowing fan, containing some auspicious materials in it as soon as the groom reaches the wedding place. Sometimes eggs are thrown at him, This form of welcome is prevalent in East Bengal. But in West Bengal, this welcome of the groom is performed by the women in the Chhandnatala before the Sampradan (offering of the bride by her parents) is performed. The selected married women welcome the groom again after the groom has been welcomed by the giver of the daughter according to Shastric rituals. Either five or seven married women, being well dressed and ornamented, go round the groom seven times blowing conch shells with the materials on the welcoming winnowing-fan. One after another, they touch the person of the groom by igniting "Dhutura lamp". Besides, in some other ways the groom is found to be welcomed.

Afterall, this is nothing but a ritual of welcome of the groom. The bridegroom is ceremonially received by the utterence of incantation. This is mentioned in Bondhayana Grihya Sutra (1. 2. 18).

3. **Padya** : The ritual like 'Padya" with the incantations of Sanskrit formulae is mentioned in the Bondhayana Grihya Sutra (1. 2. 20).

4. **Arghya** : The reference of Arghya with the incantation of Sanskrit formulae is mentioned in Bondhayana Grihya Sutra (1. 2. 25).

5. **Madhuparka** : The ritual of Madhuparka with the utterance of Sanskrit formulae is mentioned in Khadira Grihya Sutra (24. 11).

6. **Sampradan** : The earliest reference of Sampradana may be traced back in Taitiriya Brahmana (2. 4—6) of black Yajurveda. The Grihya Sutra also refers to this verse mentioned in Taitiriya Brahmana and by uttering the formulae the bridegroom formally accepts the bride along

with dowry and other presents which have been mentioned in Bondhayanā Grihya Sutra (1. 1. 17) and Agnibesya Grihya Sutra (1. 6. 1).

7. **Panigrahana** : (Holding of hands). The earliest reference of holding hands is referred to in Surya Sukta of Rig-Veda (10. 86. 36). The details associated with this particular ritual are described in Manava Grihya sutra (1. 10. 15).

Kushandika : Homa performed on the wedding night or on the following day.

Bibaha-homa—The reference of Bibaha-homa is mentioned in Bondhayana Grihya Sutra (1. 4. 1.) and Rig-Vedic Khila (3. 15. 1).

9. **Hridaya Grahana** : (Acceptance of heart and mind) —The earliest reference of "Hridaya Grahana" is found in Bondhayana Grihya Sutra (1. 4. 1.) and Rig-Vedic Khila (3. 15. 1).

10. **Agni Pradakshin** : Earliest reference is made in Apastamba Grihya Sutra (2. 4. 17).

11. **Laja Homa** : Earliest resference is made in Hiranyakesin Grihya sutra (1. 20. 3 and Paraskara Grihya Sutra (1. 6. 2).

12. **Bhojanadi Mantra** : The earliest mention is made in Baraha Grihya Sutra (15. 22), Mana-Va-Grihya Sutra (1. 14. 12) and Khudira Grihya Sutra 29. 1).

13. **Saptapadi** : The earliest mention of Saptapadi is made in Grihya Sutras. The utterance of Sanskrit formulae of Saptapadi is common in all the Grihya Schools and hence it is thought that Saptapadi is one of the earliest rituals in wedding cermonies. Pillai (1958) has shown that the Sanskrit formulae which are now uttered in Saptapadi ritual are connected with wedding ceremony borrowed from Agnistoma sacrifice mentioned in Apastamba Sranta Sutra of the Vedic rituals.

After the completion of Saptapadi rituals some

Sanskrit chants are uttered by the wedding couple jointly as they will become inseparable unit in future as mentioned in Bondhayana Grihya (1. 1. 28).

Even in the medieval literature the reference of these Shastric rituals have been mentioned, which indicates the continuity of these rites since early time.

It has been mentioned in the legendary story of the marriage of Lord Siva (Sivayana, 17th Century) that the wedding ceremony of Lord Siva had been performed with the performance of Shastric rituals and thereafter the rituals like, Bar-Baran, Sampradan, Panigrahana and Kushandika are found in practice in the modern society.

Some of these Shastric rituals like, 1) Prayaschitya Homa, 2) Laja Homa, and 3) Asmakraman are also found to have been observed in Manasamangal Kavyas (15th—16th Century A.D.).

Stri-Achara : According to some schools of thoughts the rituals relating to Stri-Achara are not treated to be as part and parcel of the Shastric rituals, but some of these rituals possibly originated due to prolonged contact with the Aryans and the non-Aryans of the autochthones and, in course of time, these have been incorporated into the matrix of the idioms of the rituals. These rituals may again be traced back in Konsika-Sutra of the Atharvaveda in which these Stri-Acharas are called as Stri-Karmani or women's rituals. There are two types of songs and chants, one being of a social and peaceful character regarding marriage and begetting af children. Book XIV of the Atharvaveda depicts these magical spells and songs vividly and mention of these may be found in an elaborated version of Rig-Veda. Some of the wedding rituals have been depicted in Surya Sukta of Rig Veda which were described more lucidly in Grihya Sutras.

There is a reference of Dara-Kutar-Pan in Surya Mangal (about 10th Century A.D.), which has been defined as a vessel containing rice mixed with clarified butter placed above three pieces of wood—'Dara' or wood. This vessel is to be placed on fire by lighting straw and thus a cooked material is obtained.

This is thought to be highly ceremonious and potential as well.

Barjatra : In observing this ritual the groom in an auspicious moment being well-dressed and after other rituals having been performed at home, starts for the bride's house accompanied by some other relatives and friends. On his arrival at the bride's house, the groom at first, has to go to a place where water is available.

This being done, the groom resumes his journey in an easternly direction uttering some Sanskrit formulae. The reference of this ritual is made in Katharka Grihya Sutra (23.4.).

SPECIAL PRIVILEGES

(Letters to the Editer,

Sir,—Even after three decades or our independence, the Government thinks in terms of more and more special privileges "in the Government services for the Scheduled Castes and scheduled Tribes' (October 21), although in the Constitution it was to continue for a period of 15 years. It has now virtually become a princely privilege and appears, at present that the process will run to eternity. Inspite of serious warnings even from some Janata stalwarts against this sheer populist tendency of the Government, there appears to be no healthy rethinking on this vital issue that has now legitimately given rise to vehement protests from other sections of the people. Mr Charan Singh was on record as having said. "It was obvious that the reservation was not a long-term remedy and often its effect on its beneficiaries was unhealthy, even demoralizing. It was because of these that she national leadership opposed reservation" (April 2-3). And, Mr Jagjivan Ram cleared the air by admitting that "Special rights cannot be a permanent feature" and also pointed out that the distinction will make people think that it is a community of incompetent and inferior people (March 28-29)

It is high time the Government gave due thought to the President's advice that 'caste should not be a criterion for providing help to the poor' (Madras, October 5). And, referring to the setting up of Harijan colonies segregating them from other communities, he wondered why the poor from other castes should not be provided houses in the same colony". Our leaders glibly talk against the vice of apartheid practised in South Africa. Does not this segregation method smacks of this vice ? Willy rather than nilly, the political leaders

indulge in this harmful practice only to gather cheap encomiums with an eye to winning people over to remain in or gain power at the bitter cost of national integration in the long run. It was rightly said that "backwardness has a tendency to perpetuate itself and become a vested interest". usurping the plece of the same old princely order which was abolished with so much fanfare. Surely, it was not done to make room for these neo-princes.—**Sachindra Nath Mukherjee.** Calcutta.
